

THE AFGHAN DILEMMA

TALIBAN AND THE UNITED STATES

Abdul-Qayum Mohmand - John Feffer - Mullah Abdulasalam Zaeef
Alex Strick Van Linschoten - Hashmattollah Moslih - Michael Semple
Waheed Mozhdah - Livia Nassius - Hussain Haqqani

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The return of Taliban to the Afghan political scene and the impending withdrawal of foreign troops from the country by the end of 2014 are only two of the many pressing issues that call for further investigation and in depth analyses. Hence the Doha Conference on "The Afghan Dilemma," organized by the Forum for Arab and International Relations to shed more light on the possible scenarios for a long term solution, and for a viable dialogue between US, Taliban and other Afghan groups in the foreseeable future.

The present book of conference proceedings includes the most insightful contributions to our convention. It also tackles two related issues of paramount significance for the understanding and ultimate solution of the Afghan crisis: the problematic US-Pakistan relations, and the use of drones as a new- but no less brutal- war tactic with mounting numbers of civilian casualties.

We hope this book will instigate further explorations of the prospects for dialogue and mutual understanding between all parties concerned, leading to peace and tranquility in this war-torn and tragic country.



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Hussain Haqqani is a journalist, academic and prominent Pakistani diplomat. He was the special assistant and spokesperson for Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef (1990-1992), and the spokesperson for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1995-6) before her assassination. In 2008, Haqqani was appointed Pakistan's Ambassador to the US, but he resigned his post in 2011, following what has come to be known as "Memogate." He was accused of high treason for writing a secret memo to Admiral Michael Mullen calling for direct US intervention to restructure the Pakistani military and security apparatus. He is presently professor of international relations at Boston University, and he supervises the »Project for Islam and Democracy« at the Hudson Institute in Washington.

Introduction

Afghanistan has not had even the briefest period of rest in the last three decades or so. It entered its current crisis with the communist coup of April 27, 1978. The brutal Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation followed fast on its heels. Then came the extended period of civil war and the equally brutal American invasion and subsequent occupation, spanning two decades. Today the increasing violence and lethality of the Afghan warring scene are likely to escalate further as the country expects yet another station on the cross. The much anticipated annus mirabilis, 2014, will witness the final withdrawal of US, NATO and ISAF forces, the Afghan government official takeover of the military and security responsibilities in the country, and the first presidential election to be held with no foreign troops on Afghan soil, and with the full participation of all factions, including Taliban.

Yet here perhaps lies the roots of the future dilemma of Afghanistan. Indeed, the many questions raised by the forthcoming events underscore the momentous tasks ahead- accommodating the return of Taliban to the Afghan political scene, the impact this return will have on the socio-economic and politico-cultural situation in the country, and the outcome of what seems to be an inevitable showdown between the Taliban and the Afghan government in Kabul after the withdrawal of foreign forces.

The withdrawal itself is wrought with danger and is viewed with pessimism by most observers. On one hand, the US would be

leaving Afghanistan having failed to deliver the promised transition to peace and stability in the country. It has also sustained heavy losses both in economic terms, with over five hundred billion dollars of US tax payers money spent; and in human terms, with thousands dead and wounded from both camps, although no official count of civilian body bags is offered here either. On the other hand, the weakening Afghan government is counterpoised by the advances on the ground Taliban has been making recently. As for the losses sustained by Afghanistan itself, they defy calculation and are not less than the complete destruction of a whole country.

The plight of today's Afghanistan is met with appalling worldwide denial. The US and other NATO and ISAF countries systematically ignore the deteriorating human and humanitarian situation to focus almost exclusively on their organized retreat and on the safe return of their troops. The Arab and Islamic countries are equally oblivious to the human tragedy. They hold on to such stigmatized images of Afghanistan that pigeonhole Taliban, the Northern Alliance, the Afghan government and other forces into comfortable stereotypes, preferring to understand only the preconceived lessons they wish to understand.

The only serious Arab/Islamic attempt to help resolve the conflict so far has been made by the state of Qatar. A Taliban Political Office was officially opened in Doha in June 2013, after nearly two years of intensive discussions between Qatari and Taliban officials. The objective was to facilitate US-Taliban dialogue after some positive statements were made by both parties suggesting the possibility of such a dialogue and its paramount significance. The Office however encountered some operational difficulties and delays, due to the climate of mutual distrust and the sheer intransigence of both sides. It was even temporarily closed pending the resolution of many issues, including Taliban's insistence on hoisting the flag of "the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," whereas the venue was meant to be a political platform for the movement itself. Nor has the dialogue actually started, although official rounds of talks were scheduled to have taken place some two years ago. Another major stumbling block has been the failure to exchange

five senior members of Taliban, held prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, with one US operative captured by Taliban. Equally problematic have been the contradictory statements coming from both camps, expressing a wish to start talking to each other but also and at the same time to continue fighting!

Taliban however remains a powerful force to reckon with in the Afghan military and political scene. It derives its strength partly from the sizable Pashtun ethnicity (almost half the population of Afghanistan's 30 million), which has historically defied and defeated successive foreign occupations (the British in the past and the Soviet more recently), and which predominantly finds in Taliban an expression of its aspirations and cultural identity. This considerable representative power, to add to its resilience and military might, necessitates that Taliban is ipso facto an integral part of any Afghan solution. And, as their willingness to hold direct talks with Taliban suggests, the US and other European countries seem to have come to this conclusion at last. But Taliban needs to change its triumphalist thinking and to stop viewing the impending withdrawal of NATO and ISAF forces as a vindication of its isolationist discourse and regressive policies, towards other Afghan groups in particular and the political world at large.

Taliban must also declare- publically and categorically- its full commitment to democracy and power sharing. Part of the problem with the movement today is that Taliban does not wish to reveal its vision for the future of Afghanistan till after the withdrawal of foreign troops. But this leaves the country vulnerable to a particularly dangerous risk. Although Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, has recently affirmed the movement's willingness to reach out to other Afghan groups and to "integrate with them in the best interest of the country"- a sentiment welcomed by the Afghan government and further reciprocated by allowing Taliban fighters to stand in the coming elections, including the decisive presidential elections of 2014- the problem might lie much deeper and prove much more intractable. As its first term in office showed, Taliban suffers and continue to suffer the same malaise of like-minded Islamic movements whose ideological orientations

systematically weaken their faith in democracy, if not totally undermine it or even run counter to it.

The momentum of Taliban's recent offensive and the willingness of the US, NATO and ISAF countries to hold direct talks with the movement, might also give Taliban enough self-confidence to monopolize power once more. But Taliban must know that the Afghan forces allied to it today in the bid to free the country from foreign occupation might well turn against it tomorrow, when the national struggle turns into a civil strife and a feud for power, influence and self-interest after 2014. The more so as semi-independent factions increasingly align themselves with Taliban, pointing to the need to change the close knit inner structure into a broader umbrella, and as more tribal forces differ with Taliban's vision for the future of Afghanistan but temporarily tolerate it for the sake of unity in the fight for independence and liberation. In other words, Taliban's moral monism and hegemonic policies are at odds with the needed pluralistic ethos of the coming era.

Precisely how to handle this transitional era, and how to engage with Taliban itself in the face of this profound change to the circumstances in Afghanistan is a topic meriting urgent discussion. Hence the Doha Conference, "The US-Taliban Dialogue: Future Orientations," organized by the Forum for Arab and International Relations on October 18, 2012. Our contributors spoke with an eye toward offering their visions for possible approaches to negotiations in order to achieve a peaceful and stable outcome in Afghanistan. The present book is a review of the most insightful contributions, along with two other studies included because they have direct bearings on the Afghan dilemma- the Pakistan-Afghanistan-US relations, and the use of drones as a US war tactic and strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan today and in the post withdrawal era.

Generally speaking, outsiders and pundits alike would be tempted to dismiss the prospects of negotiations yielding any tangible benefit, given the nature of Taliban, the American interests in Afghanistan, and the complexities of other interests at stake. Particularly striking are the inflammatory images which are generated all too often in Afghanistan. Suicidal attacks, mortar

fire into urban environments, and targets deliberately selected to maximize press attention have been all too frequent occurrences. On March 9, 2013, for instance, as Chuck Hagel made his first official visit after his appointment as US Secretary of Defense, an attack outside the Afghan Defense Ministry marked a grim reception, rejecting a message of general optimism behind the process of nation-building and negotiated compromise.

The Americans too have their own problems. A year before Hagel's visit, prominent American politicians, such as Republican candidate for president Mitt Romney, emphatically rejected negotiations with the Taliban.[1] Pressures from the isolationist wing of the Republican Party in particular are mounting, calling on the president to cut and run, and for the US to mind its own business. The lack of a clear and detailed American road map and the economic cost of the nation/state building venture in Afghanistan are raising ever more eyebrows within Obama's own party, further uniting classical Republicans and wavering Democrats. There is little expectation, it is safe to say, that negotiations could possibly bear fruit.

Still, in what seems to be a Gramscian spirit of intellectual pessimism and willful optimism, our contributors put forth their ideas and scenarios for the prospects of successful negotiations, either between the US and the Taliban directly, or between the Taliban and other parties in Afghanistan, which might result in some form of stable resolution. Some contributors regarded the current withdrawal plan as a sort of "hunker down into frontier fortresses," not unlike the strategy adopted by the crusaders or later by the British in the American War of Independence. Others saw Afghanistan gripped by a continuation of the "Great Games" as regional and global powers vie for dominance. Yet others still offered visions, which overlap in some respects, but each sought to contribute to a path towards resolving a conflict that has preoccupied the international community since 1978.

1 Deborah Charles, "Romney says U.S. should not negotiate with Taliban," Reuters News, available at http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/17/us-usa-campaign-taliban-idUSTRE80G06P20120117 (accessed April 1, 2013).

Mohmand sees a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, as both sides commence ongoing attacks without any sustainable gains. He concurs with Zaeef in that both sides have realized that the war can only be resolved through negotiations and compromise, though he acknowledges that the process remains problematic. Mohmand shares Feffer's view of a "wait and see" approach by both sides, which he views as an incentive to prolong fighting and refrain from the sort of confidence building measures necessary to enable productive negotiations. The Americans and Afghan government seek to win "hearts and minds" and let reforms bear fruit, while the Taliban awaits the departure of foreign troops at which point their strategic power will enable the destruction of the government. Lacking alternatives, Mohmand sees the two sides as imposing unrealistic preconditions upon negotiations, and in particular, the Taliban's persistent reluctance to negotiate with the Karzai government. Yet Mohmand believes that if confidence is established, a multi-step, transitional mechanism bringing in local institutions may result in a lasting peace.

In contrast to Semple, Mohmand believes the US should take the initiative by releasing Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo, Bagram, and other prisons, and by removing Taliban names from various blacklists. The US should also cease efforts to drive a wedge between "moderate" and "hardline" factions within the Taliban which simply wastes resources and arouses distrust. The Taliban, by contrast, should assuage American fears of being perceived as weak in Afghanistan even as the Americans drawdown military forces, and in particular, Mohmand cites as encouraging a section of the Pashto text of the statement by Mullah Muhammad Omar on Eid al-Fitr focused on Taliban's agenda for Afghanistan, which warns against causing harm to civilian life and property.

Unlike the other contributors, Mohmand sees American interests in obtaining immense gas and oil reserves as a possible justification for American intransigence, and given this lack of trust, he sees a need for the United States to seize the initiative by ending efforts to destroy the Taliban and commencing plausible negotiations. In his view, the Taliban should not accept the current constitution of Afghanistan without some amendment, nor will they accept a total ceasefire or enter into negotiations with the

Afghan government, as doing so would amount to a surrender and a renunciation of their identity as forces fighting against foreign occupation, though they may tactically curb attacks when they see evidence of serious intentions by the Americans. In the meantime, Mohmand urges, the Taliban should recognize the limits of their ambitions and capabilities and the unrealistic nature and extreme cost underlying these ambitions.

Aside from the direct engagement, Mohmand notes conflicts between Qatar and Saudi Arabia as they vie with Pakistan for leadership in the region and in the Muslim world. As he views, the Karzai-led Afghan government is suffering severe handicaps, and as such, it needs the negotiation process in order to maintain legitimacy in Afghanistan. Thus, Mohmand sees that the United States, as the ultimate power, should initiate negotiations with the Taliban, which during a three stage process that would expand to include the Afghan government and other actors, could result in achieving a viable peace.

Feffer presents at least three different visions of American policy toward the Taliban and Afghanistan. In his view, the default scenario consists of an interaction led by the "stay and fight" position of the Pentagon mitigated by a "cut and run" posture proposed by President Obama and Congress; this interaction results in a "wait and see" default policy which would unilaterally drawdown troops in Afghanistan and then watch to see whether the nation built since 2001 is able to survive on its own. A second scenario, primarily favored by the State Department, adapts Cold War "divide and conquer" strategy to seek to drive a wedge between the Taliban and Al Qaeda. A third scenario, the "kitchen sink" approach favored by certain think tanks and outside actors, focuses upon broadening the players involved in negotiations to include regional and international actors in a number of different capacities.

Feffer's scenarios lend themselves to starkly contrasting visions of the ultimate end game. The "wait and see" approach treats the Taliban as an enemy, so preferred images maximize the number of dead enemies while minimizing the number of American casualties, lending itself to plans involving soldiers hunkered down in American bases from which drones and Special Operations forces

commence sorties against loosely defined "hostiles." Precedents informing this notion include both American frontier fortresses and crusader castles of another era. The "wedge" strategy invokes images of Taliban officers capturing, expelling, and executing Al Qaeda or other foreign terrorist organizations with personnel in Afghanistan, essentially adopting various "heads on stakes" tactics to close the territory off to such groups. Feffer acknowledges that even should the Taliban do so, however, this will be unlikely to satisfy potent American political strands inimical to Islam itself. A "kitchen sink" approach lends itself to imagery of multiple parties parleying civilly and peacefully, which he sees as the ideal scenario as it indicates a burgeoning and functional civil society.

Zaeef shares several of Feffer's and Mohmand's views regarding the prospects for negotiations at this critical point for Afghanistan, but maintains a proposal that complete freedom, security, and mutual respect may yet be achieved if four challenges are overcome:

- Repudiating the illegitimate demands of certain powerful countries, particularly America and its allies. These demands and the basis for their illegitimacy are not clearly delineated within this chapter, but the implication of covetous intentions may fit with Mohmand's concern that America's intentions involve access to Afghanistan's resources.
- Repudiating the illegitimate demands of certain neighboring countries. These are also undefined in this piece, but the reference would extend to Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and other states with interests in Afghanistan.
- Strengthening Afghanistan politically, economically, and militarily.
- Establishing a powerful regime in Afghanistan, along the lines of the regime which pre-existed the Soviet invasion, and which is generally acceptable and not subject to control by power-hungry factions.

Zaeef believes that negotiations in Afghanistan should proceed along two phases, first an internationally-focused phase and second a domestic phase. He believes the Taliban will not start serious

negotiations on the second phase until the first is resolved, but the first cannot even start until America is willing to directly engage with the Taliban. This he believes has not happened because American efforts had favored supporting the Kabul-based government, which is at least partially driven by a desire to evade domestic political fire in America.

Zaeef then turns to the situation after 2014, when the ISAF combat mission concludes and the majority of American troops withdraw from Afghanistan. Unless negotiations commence urgently between America and the Taliban, he anticipates a high probability of renewed hostilities, which might be mitigated should the American forces assure other parties that they will continue to maintain some form of presence and cease to operate through the "puppet regime" in Afghanistan. Once the Americans reach some form of resolution with the Taliban, then a non-partisan Afghan body may lead the negotiations. Accordingly, he offers proposals to the United States, the Kabul regime, the Taliban, neighboring countries, and the international community, which collectively require emphasis on adjusting to realities and favoring diplomacy.

What images would reflect Zaeef's prescription? Only one comes to mind: a shift from a "war strategy" to a "peace strategy" by America would replace drone attacks and military operations with direct public or private negotiations between American leaders or their designees with Taliban leaders. But how would the Afghan government move from mere theatrics to real negotiations, as Zaeef suggests, or the Taliban "adjust" to world politics? Is Zaeef proposing a variation upon Feffer's "kitchen sink" approach to account for involvement by India, Pakistan and Iran, except with their previously unhelpful interventions replaced by more favorable ones? How is it possible for the international community to act as a neutral body which does not allow other countries to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, when the international community must complete the first phase of negotiations before those internal affairs can even be broached? Unfortunately, this brief contribution cannot answer these questions, though perhaps further clarity is elusive given the complexities in Afghanistan.

Van Linschoten notes that the framework for negotiations so far

has been fixated upon securing American interests, rather than for building peace within Afghanistan, and in particular, local groups are reluctant to negotiate with the Taliban lest they risk legitimizing their opponent. This contrasts with the view offered by Moslih, who indicated no specific concerns with negotiating the Taliban, and with Mohmand, who believes the Karzai government's primary interest in leading with the Taliban is to secure its own legitimacy.

An agreement between the Taliban and the United States will not prevent possible civil war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban after 2014. Instead, engagements among Afghans will be required to resolve open questions, such as the role of Islam in society, the nature of government and governance appropriate in Afghanistan, the meaning of Jihad, the status of foreigners and NGOs operating in Afghanistan, and measures to mitigate further outside interference in Afghan affairs. Van Linschoten notes ample precedence for inclusive, intra-Afghan efforts, citing with approval cooperative interactions between the Taliban and the Ministry of Education in textbook reform, which he sees as still preliminary but as appropriate bases for further efforts at national reconciliation. Whether such reconciliation results in a confederal system, as Moslih advocates, or a centralized system as most other contributors favor, remains to be determined by the Afghan people themselves.

Like Moslih, van Linschoten favors intra-Afghan talks, noting that this aspect of negotiations has been surpassed by the possibility of rapprochement between the Taliban and the United States. In his view, discussions among Afghans will prove to be more important than any talks between the Taliban and the United States. Where Moslih suggests provincial security forces, van Linschoten notes that the different regional militia groups impede actual negotiations.

Moslih sees Afghanistan on a path towards violent disintegration along ethnic and tribal lines, and a further probability that the collapse of Afghanistan will spread through Pakistan, and potentially Iran and Iraq. Moslih, citing the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline, regards the Taliban as a former "business partner" of the United States, and believes Washington wants to deal with them as soon as they distance themselves from Al-Qaida. Unlike the other contributors, Moslih sees the United States problems in the Middle East as

starting with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and extending through the region, with echoes in Afghanistan as the U.S. takes positions favorable toward enemies of the Northern Alliance, particularly Pashtun and Pakistani interests, and harmful toward the federalism which he sees as the only solution for Afghanistan's political and security problems. Specifically, he proposes seven aspects of a mandate that he believes may result in ultimate peace and avert the regional catastrophe, namely, embracing a parliamentary system, enabling provincial elections to result in appointments of governors, enabling those provinces to handle their own police affairs, adopting a mixed market economy, initiating peace negotiations with the Taliban, restoring general conscription into the national army, and holding new elections after the establishment of a government of national unity.

Moslih's vision appears to consist of a confederation model of associated but somewhat independent provinces, each responsible for internal police and security, cooperatively acting within a national unity framework to repel foreign interests, particularly Iranian and Pakistani interests seeking to exploit Afghanistan.

By comparing and contrasting the Afghan and Irish peace processes, Semple proposes a path of action for the primary actors, focusing on the role of insurgent leadership, the approach to ceasefires, the role of prisoner releases, and the role of external mediation as key factors which were handled differently in both processes. In his view, the latest incarnation of an Afghan peace process commenced with the London Conference on Afghanistan in January 2010, as Afghan and US government signaled an interest in expanding previous efforts to buy off disaffected fighters and move instead toward actual reconciliation. He briefly touches upon what he sees as orchestrated efforts and setbacks relating to the High Peace Council as well as a separate negotiations track launched in Qatar.

Semple draws the following major contrasts between the Afghanistan peace process and the Irish peace process:

(1) Taliban leadership has been conspicuously absent from any engagement with a peace process.

(2) Prisoner releases have been an area of regular concession

requested by the Taliban and offered by the Afghan government. However, since prisoner releases have occurred without an overall political framework, no prison-based peace constituency has developed in Afghanistan, whereas reformed prisoners disavowing violence played a key role in the Irish reconciliation.

(3) The unilateral ceasefire announced by the Irish Republicans in 1994 was a culmination of ceasefire talks which commenced in 1990. However, Semple regards the strategy in Afghanistan as one of "talk and fight" with no clear path proposed towards a ceasefire seriously contemplated by the Taliban, which may be reluctant to consider such an approach in any event given the possibility that separate factions of the Taliban might break off and continue fighting.

(4) Trusted external parties made significant contributions to the Irish peace process, but to date, the Afghan Government and the US have resisted the entry of external mediators, though Semple proposes that external mediators, in particular Qatar, may still serve to facilitate a peace process.

Nassius and LeVine add a section describing the critical importance of drones for any progress in Afghanistan. After reviewing the origins of drone technology, political debates in Washington, and considering how drones may be used after the transition in Afghanistan, Nassius and LeVine discuss points of contention regarding drones in general as tools of tactical and strategic policy. Nassius and LeVine expand upon Feffer's point that the reliance upon drones by the Pentagon as a replacement for "boots on the ground" to kill Taliban leaderships is likely to be counterproductive as the people in Afghanistan and Pakistan grow increasingly hostile toward the United States. Although Nassius and LeVine are primarily concerned with the nature and use of drones, it would seem that they share Feffer's and other contributors' views that they will not by themselves achieve substantial policy aims. The actual collateral damage they cause and the crooked and cold-blooded calculations used by various US bodies to hide the real number of drone victims raise larger human and moral issues that need to be reconsidered.

The other added section is Hussain Haqqani's "Break Up is not Hard to Do: Why the US-Pakistan Alliance Isn't Worth the Trouble." Here, the former Pakistani Ambassador to Washington outlines the complex history of the US-Pakistan diplomatic relations in which Afghanistan features large. The US, Haqqani maintains, has always wanted Pakistan to make a strategic shift of focus towards protecting its internal stability and to using US aid to further its economic development, whereas Pakistan has always insisted on competing with India and expanding its influence in Afghanistan. As Musleh has frequently complained, Pakistan has always seen Afghanistan as its backward backyard and its legitimate sphere of influence where it maintains its omnipresence by all means possible, including what Admiral Mike Mullen once called "the use [of] violent extremism as an instrument of policy."

The US-Pakistan strategic divergence however did not prevent their active cooperation at two historic junctures- the early fifties when Eisenhower and his secretary of state Dulles exchanged US aid for Pakistan's vigorous anti-communist policies; and in the late seventies when the two countries labored "to expand a relatively small Pakistani-backed insurgency… the Afghan mujahideen, which had been trained by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and funded by the CIA."

Musleh definitely disagrees with Haqqani on the genesis and development of the movement his study has wholeheartedly defended. But where the two equally definitely agree is on the belief that had it not been for Pakistan's support, Taliban would never have existed or continued to exist. The close links between the two made the US threaten to declare Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism in the nineties. In the post 9/11 global war on terror, Haqqani adds, they still control the ebb and flow of US-Pakistan relations. At the apex of their friendship and cooperation, when they worked to secure a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan with Pakistan's support, top US officials (including the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the national security adviser James Jones, the director of the CIA and later secretary of defense Leon Panetta, along with Senators John McCain, Diane Feinstein, and Joseph Lieberman) worked hard to forge the various elements of a strategic

US-Pakistan partnership, while Senator John Kerry (the present Secretary of State) "spent countless hours constructing models for Afghan negotiations" and Richard Holbrooke, president Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan before his death in 2011, "shuttled between the capitals, seeking to explain U.S. policies to Pakistani officials and secure congressional support for Pakistan." At the lowest ebb of their relations- after the US covert operation in Abbottabad that killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011- the two governments narrowly averted a military coup in Pakistan and seem to have abandoned for good "the illusion of friendship and partnership." Nowadays, Pakistan is one of the least liked countries in the United States, competing with Iran and North Korea for that unenviable rank, while opinion polls on the other side show that over 80% of Pakistanis consider the United States "an enemy."

The study is a must for any careful consideration of the Afghan dilemma. First because the US-Pakistan relations will always have a direct impact on the present and future status of Afghanistan; and second because it shows that the crisis cannot be contained within the national borders of Afghanistan but is a regional crisis par excellence. A solution for the Afghan problem is indispensable for the peace and stability of all countries in the arc of crisis, stretching via Iran to the Middle East. In many ways this seems to support Musleh's argument that the Afghan dilemma is inextricably linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In reviewing these contributions, it is worth noting that the Forum for Arab and International Relations does not endorse or oppose any of these problem solving strategies, negotiation scenarios or general views aired: They all express the personal opinions of their contributors. Based on his own research and observation, each contributor has offered his personal views on the subject in good faith, tackling a highly complex and humanly very urgent issue. The present book records these views and the proceedings of the conference in which they were offered. We hope this book will shed more light on the Afghan dilemma to a larger audience; we hope it will instigate more in depth explorations of the prospects for dialogue and mutual understanding, leading to peace and tranquility in this tragic country.

Chapter One

Negotiations or "No-Go" Sessions

Abdul-Qayum Mohmand

The current political and security situation and the increase in violence in Afghanistan have forced all sides of the conflict to realize that the war in Afghanistan cannot be won through military engagements. The war will only come to an end if political negotiations would take place between the United States and the Taliban. To succeed in negotiations, elements such as mistrust, prolonging the war, and unrealistic expectations and demands have to be dealt with first. Furthermore, efforts should be made to withstand the pressure from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Once these obstacles are removed, a multi-step approach is needed for the negotiation process. This approach will eventually include all conflicting parties in the negotiation proceedings. This aim of negotiations should be to reach a comprehensive peace settlement addressing the grievances of all parties and establishing a lasting peace.

Introduction

The current war, political upheaval, and the increase and lethality of violence have further complicated the political and security state of affairs in Afghanistan since 2001. The United States and the International Security Assistance Forces (I.S.A.F.) have used various tactics in the ongoing efforts to defeat the Taliban. They continue to struggle to establish peace, security, and the rule of law, but the situation is still deteriorating despite the U.S. increased military presence. The Taliban have used direct attacks and suicide

bombings to inflict maximum damage on Afghan and foreign troops. Lately, the Taliban have infiltrated the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. Despite all these efforts, the Taliban have not made sustained notable gains. As a result, both sides of the conflict have realized that under current circumstances the war in Afghanistan cannot be won by military means. The war can only cease through negotiations, compromise, and political settlements. There is a consensus on both sides of the conflict that negotiations will have to occur to end the war in Afghanistan, but it remains uncertain when and how it would take place. At this stage of the conflict, there are certain factors creating impediments for a meaningful negotiation between the United States and the Taliban. Unless the following obstacles hindering negotiations are eliminated, both the United States and the Taliban will continue acting under the false assumption that a strategy of attrition will lead to victory.

First, there is serious mistrust and suspicion on both sides. The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries believe the Taliban would not adhere to the negotiated agreements. Negotiations are just a means for achieving their political and military objectives. The Taliban, however, think the United States is not serious about negotiation and is only interested in promoting its military and strategic agenda. The Taliban also believe that the United States is trying to give legitimacy to the Kabul/Karzai government by talking about negotiations and peace. Releasing Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo, Bagram, and any other prisons, removing the Taliban's names from the blacklist, watch-list and other lists, and stopping the scrutiny of the Taliban living in Kabul and other parts of the country would help confidence-building and create venues for trust. Conversely, the Taliban must cease their attacks on civilian facilities in Afghanistan and reduce their attacks on military establishments. This could send a signal that the Taliban are ready for negotiations. These concessions on both sides should not be understood as merely calling for more concessions. Insistence on further allowances will lead to the end of negotiations.

Second, the United States reasons that by prolonging the war

and bringing some economic and political reforms, it will be able to win "the hearts and minds" of the Afghan people. At the same time, it hopes by using heavy force, it will be able to reverse the Taliban's momentum and secure a more favorable environment in the event of negotiations. It is argued, if the Taliban are weakened, they will accept the terms imposed during negotiations without much resistance. But, the continued emphasis on war has failed for the past eleven years and has not delivered the desired peace and/or has weakened the Taliban. The Taliban, on the other hand, think by prolonging the war until 2014, they would be able to win the war and defeat the Kabul regime once the foreign forces leave.

Third, both sides come to the negotiating table with unrealistic preconditions blocking the discussions from the beginning. The United States demands that the Taliban lay down their weapons, denounce violence, break ties with al-Qaida, and accept the Afghan constitution. These demands are all non-starters. The Taliban's demand that the United States and its allies first withdraw their forces before any negotiations can take place is similarly unrealistic. Furthermore, the Taliban's rejection of negotiating with the Karzai administration, and only negotiating with the Americans, further complicates negotiations. A more productive approach would be to proceed in different stages, each building on the previous one, which should eventually include the Kabul government, Hekmatyar, and the opposition.

Fourth, the Afghan government, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia continue to pressure the United States not to negotiate with the Taliban without them. This is another factor hindering the negotiation process. These countries not only want to be included in the initial negotiation proceedings, but more importantly, they want negotiations to take place under their auspices. The Karzai government, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia want to play a major role in peace negotiations and peace settlements to reassert their power. However, the Taliban resist the inclusion of the Afghan government, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia in order to marginalize their influence.

Fifth, initiatives and practical steps must be taken to work towards a political compromise and agreement. Detailed procedural and substantive framework needs to be achieved by the negotiating

parties once they build trust and reduce suspicions. Negotiations should not be seen as a wholesale initiative, but should be approached as a multi-step and transitional mechanism. In this scenario, arrangements and agreements between the conflicting parties bring local institutions for conflict management. The result is lasting peace.

Serious Mistrust and Suspicion

Initial negotiations have failed so far, because both the Taliban and the United States view these with suspicion, and are unsure about the other's sincerity. The United States believes that the Taliban are not serious about negotiations and point to various violent attacks carried out by them, such as the assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani on 20 September 2011. The United States and the Karzai Administration argue that the assassination of Rabbani proves the Taliban are not interested in peace and want to use negotiations as a pretext to intensify their fighting and gain more ground. The United States and the Karzai government hold them responsible for the act, although the Taliban did not claim responsibility and condemned Rabbani's assassination.

The Taliban, on the other hand, argue that the United States and the Karzai government do not believe in peace negotiations. Instead they want unconditional surrender of the resistance forces and legitimacy of the Karzai government. There may be doubts on both sides that negotiations may not lead to a political settlement and the achievement of peace. The alternative is dire, but with the right intention and honest efforts, negotiations are possible.

There is a perception circulating in the political and media circles in the United States and I.S.A.F. countries that the Taliban are only interested in victory. They do not want to share power with other belligerents and seek to institutionalize a central administrative authority reminiscent of when they were in power. They want a radical Islamist rule defined by sharia that excluded rights for women and minorities. They also want to export their brand of Islam throughout the region. Unfortunately, this line of thinking is reinforced by prominent analysts, such as Anthony Cordesman, who wrote, "The Taliban and its Emirate front are

not seriously interested in negotiation that would not offer them their political gains in the war or the prospects of victory without fighting" (Cordesman, 2012). This thinking and perception hinder negotiations.

To avoid misperceptions and to establish trust, the United States should begin making concessions to the Taliban. They can accomplish this by releasing the Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo, Bagram, and other prisons, or secret "rendition" facilities and remove their names from any blacklist or watchlist. This would help confidence building, at least for the Taliban. Furthermore, an environment of trust must first be created where Taliban leaders feel secure to take part in negotiations. The Taliban leaders must feel convinced that engaging in negotiations and revealing their identity will not lead to their harassment and arrest, especially those living in Kabul and other key urban areas, and fighting on the front lines. The Taliban may come to view their adversary, the United States, as interested in compromising once the scrutiny relents towards those affiliated with the Taliban.

I believe that talking about peace negotiations while simultaneously reducing the number of American and I.S.A.F. forces would be interpreted by the Taliban as a weakened American position. Therefore, the Taliban may think that the United States and its allies are reducing aid to Afghanistan, withdrawing their forces, and preparing to leave. This position is not completely unjustified, especially when it is discussed amongst the United States armed forces. Dan Green in his article "Negotiating with the Taliban", stated:

> ***The campaign against the Taliban is increasingly assuming the character of face-saving withdrawal... the narrative of U.S. withdrawal regardless of condition on the ground and enduring U.S. economic and fiscal problems has created the perception that the United States is in decline and, at minimum, will be leaving Afghanistan more quickly than conditions on the ground would have suggested (Green, 2011).***

In order to ease these tensions, the Taliban could publicly

elaborate that talking about peace and entering into negotiations is not understood as American weakness and will not undermine the United States legitimate interests in Afghanistan and in the region. The messages issued by Mullah Mohammad Omar on Eid al-Fitr are a good initial step. The message talks about different aspects of responsibilities, policies, defensive jihad, human rights, education, and governance.

> ***To make Afghanistan a home to everyone we will make efforts to reach an understanding with the Afghan factions in due time following the withdrawal of the invading forces to establish an inclusive Islamic system acceptable to all Afghans...The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (I.E.A.) does not seek to monopolize and control power...Since all Afghans have the responsibility to protect and defend Afghanistan, they also have right to take part in the government and decision-making...The I.E.A. considers educations as a main factor advancing the Afghan people in this world and a cause of their prosperity in the world to come...We observe that some schools are burned down or students are poisoned, for which the Mujahidin (Taliban) are accused. In fact, these are conspiracies of the enemy...We are committed to give women all their legitimate rights within the framework Islamic principles, national interests, and our noble culture... We will pave ways for all compatriots inside or outside the country to use their professional and academic knowledge to service the country and the people...We will focus on reconstruction, building infrastructure, extraction of mines, rehabilitation of arid land, industrialization, and obtaining technological know-how...Those who plan to disintegrate and divide the country should know that with the support of the Afghan people, the I.E.A. will make sure no one succeed to divide our country in the name of ethnicity or geographical location...Within the framework of the Islamic principles and consideration of protection of national interests, the I.E.A. wants good relationship***

with the world, particularly with the Muslim World, and the neighboring countries. The relation will be based on mutual respect and cooperation. The I.E.A. has no intentions to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries nor would allow other countries to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The I.E.A. assures the world that it will not allow anyone to use Afghanistan against a third country... I.E.A. respects all international laws and principles within the framework of Islamic rules and principles and the consideration of Afghan national interests...We congratulate the people and the new governments that have emerged following the recent revolutions in the Arabic world...Our Jihad and sacrifice will bear fruits, if we would wage jihad in the same manners the holy Prophet and his companions have waged... Pay close attention to the protection of life, property, and honor of your people...Interact with them with full sympathy, love, respect, and compassion...Win the hearts of the people by the power of noble morals... Strictly desist from the harassment and inform your commanders about those who harass common people...During Jihadi operations, employ tactics that do not cause harm to life and property of the common countrymen...The instructions given to you for the protection of civilian life are a religious obligation to observe. Any violation readily incurs loss in this world and in the world to come. (Omar, 2012)

This message focused on the Taliban, Afghanistan-specific agenda, domestic policy, and clearly stayed away from promoting international jihad or any form of terrorism.

Another problem deals with efforts by the United States and the Afghan government to win over members of the Taliban. They attempt to offer them money, political and economic gain. These actions create suspicion among the leadership and the rank-and-file of the Taliban. They believe the United States and the Afghan government is trying to split the Taliban instead of pursuing

negotiation and peace. On that account, the Karzai government has launched an initiative "designed to incentivize 'moderate' fighters to abandon insurgency, resolve local grievances, and accept the Afghan constitution" (Bernstein, 2011). Bernstein also quotes an I.S.A.F. statement, "As of October 2011, the $141 million peace program had turned over 2,900 former fighters." The United States and its allies think a large number of people would walk away from the Taliban, leaving them with a small number of fighters isolated and unable to continue the resistance. Again, these maneuvers are detrimental in convincing the Taliban that the United States and its allies are trying to divide the Taliban and isolate the "hardliners" from the "moderates."

According to Thomas Rutting:

> ***There is no organized or recognizable 'moderate' (or any other 'political') 'faction' in the Taliban – to counterbalance the 'religious' hardliners. These categories have proven unsatisfactory to explain differences of opinion within the Taliban movement. It appears to be more useful to differentiate between currents, represented within the Taliban leadership and the commanders of lower levels. On one side, there are pragmatic, political thinking, pro-talks Taliban who understand that a political solution is desirable but who still are conservative Islamists. On the other side are those who favour a purely military approach, often combined with a hypertrophic recourse to terrorist means. (Rutting, 2010)***

Furthermore, the policy of dividing the Taliban is not working, and to continue these efforts does not help to build any credibility and support for the United States and the Karzai government. The United States and its allies continue to believe in the false assumptions that the Taliban are fighting for financial gain rather than ideology. There will always be individuals on the periphery that would use the windows of opportunity for financial gain, but those remaining on the periphery and the core will continue their resistance. There is also no guarantee that the same people will not return to the frontline. There are definitely a number of people

in the Taliban ranks who may not agree one hundred percent with the policies implemented at the political level and military front, but this cannot be interpreted as a splinter between moderate and radicals. Therefore, instead of distorting realities, wasting military and civilian efforts and vast amount of resources to weaken and isolate the Taliban, the focus should be overcoming these impediments. "Successful engagement tends to strengthen the pro-dialogue elements within armed groups, while political isolation tends to strengthen hardliners. This suggests that minimal levels of engagement need to be the norm, not a concession" (Barnes, 2009).

The United States, I.S.A.F. forces, and the Karzai government believe the Taliban are fragmented. Why negotiate when there is a possibility that they can win the "moderate" Taliban through a

> ***... combination of enhanced security, various forms of political-participation incentives, and a healthier basis for sustained, rural economic activity? A substantial reduction of the Taliban's numbers, and the organization's compromised ability to recruit new foot soldiers, would signal the untenable continuation of the leadership's goal... (Bernstein, 2011).***

Furthermore, negotiation with the Taliban will mean conceding fundamental civil and political rights of the Afghan people and agreeing to the strict implementation of the sharia laws, which will definitely affect women more than men. There is also a fear that the Taliban's resurgence will mean suppression of the minorities. All these concerns and fears are not out of place. The past experience of the Taliban rule is well known to the Afghans and the international community.

These fears, concerns, and misperceptions could be reduced in two ways. First, the Taliban, before starting with negotiations, should announce their political, economic, education, and social agenda to the Afghan people and the world community. Second, in a future construct of a government, through negotiations, the Taliban will not be the sole power-holders. In the negotiation process, they would be agreeing to a program and agenda for the future of Afghanistan, collectively decided by conflicting parties.

Efforts need to be directed to embrace all groups instead of pursuing isolation, recognizing on-the-ground realities and limits on the capacity of the Karzai government to maintain order.

Prolonging the War

Many observers, scholars, politicians, and military commanders in Afghanistan, the United States and the I.S.A.F. countries agree that the only means to ending the conflict in Afghanistan is through negotiation with the Taliban. However, there is a continued resistance from the United States to admit to this reality. I believe that policy makers and war commanders of the United States know that agreeing to negotiate with the Taliban would display weakness. Therefore, they refuse to negotiate until the United States and I.S.A.F. forces gain the advantage on the battlefield. Prolonging the war has become the new trend instead of an active engagement with the Taliban. In my opinion, they believe that Afghanistan's thirty-year history of war and destruction will exhaust the Taliban.

There is an unreported effort to reduce the number, strength, and capacity of the Taliban by means of financial, political, and economic promises. Prolonging the war creates two problems. First, the intensity of war must be escalated in order to achieve the position of strength. It is uncertain they will achieve this end, but it will lead to the loss of many more lives and the destruction of Afghanistan. Second, policy-makers and military commanders will not seek negotiations anyway. The Taliban think along the same line, and therefore, negotiations and peace become remote.

In the past eleven years the United States has reiterated that it will win the war and defeat the Taliban. This mentality and emphasis on war has forced the United States and its allies in Afghanistan to use different methods and strategies, including chemical weapons and depleted uranium (Afghanistan, 2002). With these arms, they failed to defeat the Taliban and win the war. Not only have they failed, but also the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated and the Taliban has gained more ground. Furthermore, the United States and I.S.A.F. are running out of options to deal with the current war and have no clear plan how to deal with the Taliban after 2014. "It is unclear that U.S. and I.S.A.F. have effective plans

to deal with the political nature of the war they are fighting, or credible plans for developing the Afghan National Security Forces (A.N.S.F.)" (Cordesman, 2012).

The United States and its allies' multi-dimensional efforts to win the war in Afghanistan by military means have failed and did not deliver the intended stability and peace since the invasion. President Barack Obama presented his Afghanistan strategy entitled "The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan" in his United Nations address. The U.S. goal is the disruption, dismantling, and defeat of al-Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan, reverse the Taliban momentum, and deny them the ability to overthrow the Kabul government. President Obama outlined venues to achieve this aim. He stated, "First, we will pursue a military strategy that will break the Taliban's momentum and increase Afghanistan's capacity over the next 18 months. Second, we will work with our partners, the United Nations, and the Afghan people to pursue a more effective civilian strategy, so that the government can take advantage of improved security" (Obama, 2009).

A reality check in Afghanistan shows the opposite. The government remains corrupt, the judiciary is malfunctioning, and the Taliban are stronger than before in many regions. The latest attacks on the U.S. base at the Jalalabad Nangarhar Airport, 2 December 2012, and on Camp Bastion in the Helmand province, 14 September 2012, have proven that the Taliban have the ability to strike hardened targets with success. I argue that their accomplishments originate from their patience. The Taliban remains alive and intact. I believe that American personnel have doubts about the effectiveness of their battle plan and their support of the Afghan government. Mr. Matthew Hoh, former U.S. Senior Civilian Representative in the Zabul province confirms this point in his resignation letter to Ambassador Nancy J. Powell (10 September 2009). He stated, "Like the Soviets, we continue to secure and bolster a failing state, while encouraging an ideology and the system of government unknown and unwanted by its people...The U.S. military presence in Afghanistan greatly contributes to the legitimacy and strategic message of the Pashtun insurgency. In a like manner, our backing of the Afghan government in its current form continues to distance the government from the people."

The Taliban also has a strategy for prolonging the war. They believe that if they could prolong the war until 2014, when all the international forces have left the country, they will be able to defeat the Kabul regime and achieve an outright victory against the remaining contingent. It is not certain if the United States intends to leave Afghanistan. But, what are U.S. interests in Afghanistan? Will the United States continue its campaign to rid the country of the Taliban and al-Qaida elements? Or, are there other motives? This is a matter of discussion for another paper, but some information will help you understand why the Taliban line of thinking will fail.

The vast amount of gas and oil in the Caspian and Central Asian countries attracted the U.S. security and economic interests in the region. Policymakers in Washington and the oil magnates in the United States attempted to gain control over the production and transport of these immense gas and oil reserves. The rage in the response from the United States after 9/11 cannot be ignored or underestimated, but looking into the history of U.S.-Taliban relations, specifically the Trans-Atlantic Pipeline, one can conclude that the elimination of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, would stabilize Afghanistan for future, American energy-interests. Andy Rowell alludes to this fact,

"As the war in Afghanistan unfolds, there is frantic diplomatic activity to ensure that any post-Taliban government will be both democratic and pro-West. Hidden in this explosive geo-political equation is the sensitive issue of securing control and export of the region's vast oil and gas reserves" (Rowell, 2002).

After years of negotiations and dealings, the Taliban were not cooperating with the United States. Therefore, it was deemed necessary that a government that was protective of U.S. interests in Afghanistan should replace them. However, both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Administrations were facing the dilemma of finding an alternative that would not only protect American interests, but also be accepted by the Afghans, by establishing a central authority in the country. After the 11 September 2001 attacks, the issue of a discovering a viable alternative became secondary and concentration moved to replacing the Taliban. In order to achieve this objective, the Bush Administration began negotiating with

the same elements that were responsible[1] for the lawlessness, atrocities, and civil war between 1992 and 1996.

If foreign troops were withdrawn, first, the United States would have enough troops left in Afghanistan to keep the Kabul regime intact. Second, the government of Hamid Karzai may be able to defend itself for some time. History in Afghanistan is evidence in this regard. When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the government of Mohammed Najibullah was able to resist the mujahidin's advance until 1992. Negotiations and dealings with mujahidin leaders brought the Najibullah government to an end. According to the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, the United States has a responsibility to assist in the defense of Afghanistan, help in providing security, continue to fight insurgency and most importantly, "The conduct of ongoing military operations" will "continue under existing frameworks" (House, 2012). This means more violence leading towards a stalemate. The current military confrontation will move to a war of attrition for the Afghans. In addition, the forces of the former Northern Alliance, and other opposition groups, are heavily armed. Defeating them by military means will result in heavy casualties for the Taliban.

From the history of warfare, we know that negotiations are only successful when the involved parties realize that they will not be able to achieve their goals and objectives through the continuation of fighting. The American Revolution, the Algerian Revolution against the French occupation, the civil war in Namibia, El Salvador, and Angola, and the Palestinian-Israeli backdoor negotiations are examples indicating that warring factions were forced to negotiate

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1 The Northern Alliance came into existence as a coalition of groups after the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was defeated by the Taliban in 1996. The groups were: Jamiat-I Islami, Wahdat Islami, Itihad Islami, Junbish Militia, Jabha-i Nijat Milli, and other small groups. The leaders were: Burhanuddin Rabani, Ahmad Shah Massoud, Qasim Fahim, Younas Qanoni, Abdullah Abdullah, Ismael Khan, Karim Khalilli, Mohammad Muhaqiq, Mudabir, Abdul Rashid Dostam, Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf, Sibghatullah Mujadedi, Sayed Ahmad Gilani, Haji Abdul Qadeer, Atta Mohammad Noor, and other. All these groups and people were responsible for the destruction of Kabul, the killing and atrocities, rape, human rights abuses, kidnapping, extortion and many other crimes, which took place during their reign between 1992 and 1996. The U.N. and many other human rights organizations publish the records of their crime.

because the alternative was failing. Therefore, "negotiation and war fighting must go hand-in-hand; they are ultimately, and, perhaps ironically, two sides of the same political coin" (Bernstein, 2011). The United States and its allies might mistakenly kill leaders in the Taliban who are willing to negotiate if they continue with the policy of war and elimination of its leadership.

The United States and its allies need to bring an end to the fighting and reach a political compromise with the Taliban. The United States, along with its partners in the international community, should focus their efforts on meeting urgent economic needs and achieving a deeper understanding of Afghanistan's unique and resilient social values and political culture. Failure to recognize such realities can only lead to the deterioration and eventual demise of U.S. influence in Afghanistan.

Unrealistic Demands and Preconditions

The demands of the United States and its allies requiring that the Taliban accept the constitution, lay down their weapons and agree to the disarmament process are creating an obstacle to negotiations. If the Taliban would accept these conditions, there would be no need for fighting and negotiations. The Taliban's stance against the constitution is similarly unreasonable as the U.S. demand for the acceptance of the constitution. The constitution needs revisions and should be amended. In addition, the Taliban position that negotiations will only occur after the occupying forces leave Afghanistan, is a demand that can never be implemented. The Taliban needs to agree to negotiate with the United States now without any preconditions.

Accepting the constitution and laying down their arms would mean that the Taliban have given up their fight against foreign occupation and have accepted the status quo. They will be ordinary citizens, not a resistance movement. The Taliban should not agree to the condition of accepting the current constitution of Afghanistan. Negotiations cannot take place in the framework of the current constitution because it does not reflect the interests of all Afghans, and those involved in shaping the constitutional Jirga did not represent the Afghan people. Also, the Taliban were not part of the constitutional Jirga that drafted the constitution, and their

issues and concerns are not reflected in it. Ignoring the constitution will not serve the interests of the Taliban. It must cooperate to modify the constitution so it represents the needs of the Pashtuns and abides by Islamic law.

Although two presidential elections have passed, the same elements remain in power. They were selected through the undemocratic and unrepresentative mechanism in Bonn and placed in power. Afghans and international observers know that the group that was brought together in Bonn to discuss the future of Afghanistan "did not represent the people of Afghanistan either directly or indirectly" (Rubin, 2004). Lakhdar Brahimi, who served as chair for the talks in Bonn, "repeatedly stressed that no one would remember how unrepresentative the meeting had been if the participants managed to fashion a process that would lead to a legitimate and representative government" (Rubin, 2004).

The U.S. demand that the Taliban lay down their weapons and accept the Kabul-staged peace process would mean the Taliban's outright surrender to the Americans and the Karzai government. Without the resistance, the occupying force will continue with their policies and agendas, and will never agree to negotiate for anything. It is unreasonable to demand, at this stage of the conflict, that the Taliban should cease their attacks. Once there are real signs that the United States is serious about negotiation, the Taliban should curb their military activities and agree to a cease-fire in order for the negotiations to begin.

The Taliban's demand that the occupying forces should withdraw before any negotiations can take place is also unrealistic and creates impediments for negotiations. If the United States and its allies withdraw all their forces, the Taliban may eventually defeat the Kabul regime. They will suffer heavy losses by the government and the former Northern Alliance forces. Furthermore, the Taliban ignores an important factor in the equation. A withdrawal of foreign forces will also end their defensive jihad and a power struggle will ensue.

The Taliban's desire for an outright victory is unrealistic and over-ambitious and will result in many more deaths and the

destruction of the country. The Taliban need to recognize the realities and understand their limitations. The incoherency in the negotiation process should be administered in a fashion that allows every party involved to perceive itself as a "winner".

Political Pressure on the United States

The Karzai administration lost its minimal support it garnered at the beginning of his reign. He accomplished this by failing to provide the following:

1. Political and administrative reforms
2. A viable reconstruction plan, and
3. A sustainable economic development strategy.

Through negotiations with the Taliban, Karzai wants to obtain legitimacy. He also wants to rid himself of the title of "Shah Shuja" and "Babrak Karmal" for using the United States to gain power.

During the Soviet-Afghan War (1978-1992) and the Taliban reign (1996-2001), Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were influential to the Afghan mujahidin and the Taliban, and were important players in the decision-making of Afghanistan's politics. Pakistan lost influence after the United States invaded, installed Karzai, and imprisoned and relinquished Taliban members to the United States. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's role as the leader of the Islamic world, or ummah, is challenged by Qatar's rise to prominence. Saudi Arabia should utilize its stature in the ummah and its close relationship with the United States to bring the belligerents to the negotiating table.

The past eleven years proved to the Afghans and the world that the Karzai government does not have the political and economic capacities to respond to the needs of the Afghan people. The state is not able to provide basic public services, support everyday economic activities, and institute urgently needed programs that can provide tangible economic and social results. The country continues to overwhelm itself with political conflict, poverty, ethnic tensions, exploitation, corruption, poor governance, citizen neglect,

and foreign interference. Karzai was not able to deliver on his promises for peace, stability, and economic development. Instead, the warlords, drug traffickers, and criminals are filling the void. The Karzai administration also suffers from the lack of political and administrative reforms. The administration suffers from a deficiency of needed reconstruction and sustainable economic development. There is also a lack of social justice because of the nonexistence of responsibility and accountability that is compounded by corruption, bribery, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), foreign contractors, and warlords fueled by the drug trade. As noted, "The inability of the administration to extend security to the more-remote provinces and villages is undermining his credibility as a national leader, and forcing more Afghans into the insurgents' camp" (Bernstein, 2011).

In short, the Karzai government is illegitimate in the eyes of the Afghan people and can only prove its worth if he and his government are included in the negotiation process. Through negotiations "Karzai would boost his reputation and the legitimacy of his government if he were able to broker reconciliation with the insurgents" (Bernstein, 2011). Furthermore, Karzai knows that once the American and international forces are out of Afghanistan, and international aid is reduced, he would risk losing his remaining support.

The most important factor is Karzai's status in the eyes of the Afghan people. The president was installed as a "puppet" by the United States and followed its orders. He struggles to create an image of someone who stood against the Americans and other foreigners and extended a brotherly hand to the Taliban and other resistance forces. To achieve this status, he told people in Kandahar that in the past he was a "puppet" of foreigners, but now he has realized his mistake and has ended his relationship with them. On other occasions, he has referred to the Americans and the I.S.A.F. as "occupying forces". Negotiations with the Taliban are another maneuver in his image improvement strategy. "By encouraging Taliban to participate in the legitimate, peaceful, political process, Karzai may be able to simultaneously erode" Taliban "authority among their supporters, and impose significant cost on the non-cooperative Taliban for not playing by the rule of the game." The

thinking behind this approach is that "rejecting a credible offer that meets most of the Taliban's demands would place them in an awkward position with regard to their Afghan supporters for whom they are ostensibly fighting" (Bernstein, 2011).

Peace negotiations excluding Pakistan and Saudi Arabia may create peace and security in Afghanistan, but at their expense. Therefore, Pakistan wants to play a major role in the peace negotiations and subsequent political settlements to reassert its influence. Pakistan is not interested in establishing peace in Afghanistan, but mainly concerned about its vital interest of security and stability within its borders. Pakistan would like to control the peace process to create a sphere of influence and use it in the event of a war with India by extending its borders into Afghanistan. A Pakistani-friendly, Taliban government will achieve this.

When Pakistan realized it was excluded in the negotiation process, it tried to apply direct and indirect pressure on the United States. Directly, it blocked the transport route for the U.S. and NATO supplies to Afghanistan; and indirectly, it used its influence with Saudi Arabia to include them in the negotiations. Despite these attempts at interfering, "The Taliban declared that they could not ignore Pakistan and would not like to annoy it, even if they sought more independence and less interference by Islamabad in their decision-making," (Khan, 2012). Pakistan wants the ability to influence the Taliban's decision-making and the direction of the peace negotiations.

Saudi Arabia also seeks to improve their standing in the future Afghanistan and in the ummah. Besides promoting Pakistan's position in the peace negotiations, Saudi Arabia wants to reassert its influence over the Taliban, but more importantly, it wishes to reassert its title as the "leader of the Islamic world". Due to its own domestic problems and the lack of pluralism, Saudi Arabia failed to promote and assist the Arab spring and respond to the voices of the people. Therefore, it was left behind in the political race.

Historically, Saudi Arabia was a close ally of the Taliban, and was one of the three countries, which recognized the Taliban government when it rose to power. After the September 11th attacks,

the Taliban's refusal to officially denounce violence and break ties with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida created sore relations between the two. Various talks between the two sides to repair the relations failed. This would have allowed Saudi Arabia a leading role in the negotiations and would have ostensibly changed the venue from Doha to Riyadh.

The overall economic and political policies of Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and his government, and the extraordinary active stance of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamid bin Jassim bin Jabr Al Thani enabled Qatar to surpass Saudi Arabia and become a regional power broker. Qatar became the center of Pan-Arab communication and relationships, plays a major role in the energy industry, and "has the highest per-capita gross domestic product in the world." And the Qatari officials are "well-prepared with a detailed understanding of the nuance of their complex neighborhood" (Lister, 2012). All this annoyed Saudi Arabia who applied pressure on the United States and the Taliban to give them a leading role.

Approach to Peace Negotiations

Given the U.S. and I.S.A.F.'s failure to establish a meaningful level of security and to forge any credible plan to proceed with its war in Afghanistan, they must recognize the realities in Afghanistan and drop their unrealistic preconditions and concentrate on pragmatic peace negotiations. Several coalition partners have recognized the need for negotiations. British Foreign Secretary David Miliband urged political negotiation in March 2010. In his speech at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), Miliband asserted, "The idea of political engagement with those who would directly or indirectly attack our troops is difficult, but dialogue is not appeasement, and political space is not the same as veto power or domination" (DeYoung, 2010). In May 2012, the Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr stated, "Taliban involvement in the coalition would be desirable" and "would make a more sustainable post-2014 ethnic and regional balance in the country" (Vasek 2012). Therefore, initiatives must be taken to work towards a practical political compromise and agreement.

The Taliban argue that the Karzai government and the current political structure do not represent the people of Afghanistan and they do not have the authority to make decisions for peace negotiations and peace settlements. The United States is the ultimate decision-maker. Therefore, negotiations have to be conducted with the Americans. This is true, but it would probably be a better approach if the Taliban would agree to a multi-step peace negotiation process and talk with the Kabul regime at the second stage of negotiations.

To successfully and conclusively end the war and establish peace, the United States and I.S.A.F. forces should end their goal of reversing the Taliban momentum to secure a more favorable position and environment for negotiation. They must create an environment where the Taliban leaders can feel secure to initiate negotiations. At that point, negotiations could proceed in three stages. Before proceeding with negotiations the following points need to be clear in the minds of the Taliban and the United States.

Does the United States recognize the Taliban as a legitimate opposition force? If the answer to this question is no, then the fighting will continue. If the answer to this question is yes, then... Is the United States willing to negotiate with the Taliban without any preconditions: Negotiating without disarmament? If the answer is no, peace negotiation cannot take place. If the answer is yes, then...Are the United States and the Karzai government willing to share power with the Taliban? If both the United States and the Kabul government are not willing to share power, then negotiations have no meaning.

If the answer to the above is yes, then are the Taliban willing to negotiate without demanding that the foreign troops leave before negotiations occur; are the Taliban willing to consider accepting the constitution subject to amendments; are the Taliban willing to cease their offenses and their attacks on military and civilian facilities? If the answer is no, war will continue, but if the answer is yes, then a mechanism of negotiation must be constructed where negotiations will go through the following multi-steps approach:

First, direct negotiation between the United States and the Taliban could aim at reconciliation with patient efforts to promote a sustained dialogue. In this initial stage, the United States, its allies, and the Taliban should agree on a cease-fire, with the United States releasing Taliban prisoners and removing names of their leaders from black-lists or watch-lists. The Taliban members would follow the outcome of the negotiation only if Mullah Omar endorses the agreement. Thus, his inclusion or his approval is key for the success of any negotiation attempts.

After this, negotiations could move to the second stage, which should include the United States, the Taliban, the Afghan government, and other key actors such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Haqqani Group (if the latter were not included among the Taliban interlocutors in the first stages). Since this stage involves intricate negotiations among the Afghans, a non-partisan peace team needs to arbitrate between the conflicting parties and lead the process. This team should not include members of the government, any political parties affiliated with the government, the Taliban or opposition parties, nor jihadi groups and commanders. The objective should be compose a process aiming to create institutions for sharing and dividing power among the conflicting parties. This power-sharing framework would increase the prospects of building momentum toward an enduring peace.

The third stage of negotiation would include all of the above-mentioned groups plus opposition groups and members of the wider civil society. The first two stages of negotiations may be disrupted by any groups or elements not included in those stages. Therefore, strategies need to be prepared to mitigate their influence and deflect any violence, while including them in the growing peace process, and integrating them into the third stage. The global community can help to develop institutional foundations necessary for this process. This may help the Afghans develop leadership capacities enabling them to work together and bridge the political divides, start an inter-ethnic dialogue, and intensify the reconciliation process and social cohesion.

Conclusion

Despite the increased number of American forces and their use of various military techniques, violence in Afghanistan has intensified, political and economic progress lags behind, and there are no signs that the current military campaign in Afghanistan will defeat the Taliban and establish peace, security, and the rule of law. Similarly, the Taliban's various tactics of direct and indirect attacks, and infiltration of the National Army and National Police, have not given them any sustainable gains. In other words, the escalation, by the United States, NATO, I.S.A.F., and the Taliban, cannot end the war in Afghanistan. The war can only be "won" by all sides if they negotiate and compromise, and reach a political settlement. It is in the interest of the involved parties and the people of Afghanistan that the belligerents abandon their refusal to negotiate, compromise, and reach political settlements. The existing mistrust and suspicion on both sides must be reduced and eventually eliminated. Once the United States has released the Taliban prisoners from various prisons and detention centers, removed the Taliban's names from different lists, and have stopped the scrutiny of the Taliban, confidence will build and venues for trust will be created. The Taliban then should proceed to stop their attacks on civilian facilities and military establishments. Then, a negotiation framework must be created and the results of negotiations implemented. The ultimate objective of such a delicate and painstaking negotiation process is not only to settle the differences between the key players, but to chart an Afghan course to resolve disputes, strengthen capacities of communities, promote inter-ethnic dialogue, nourish reconciliation, build trust, and cement social cohesion and cooperation. A structured forum needs to be set into place to orchestrate and coordinate this type of comprehensive and holistic peace process, aimed at building public consensus around common values and a shared future.

To summarize, my general point was to illustrate how the United States and the Taliban have formulated their policies, agendas, and demands with respect to the war and conflict in Afghanistan, and how these formulations have created impediments for negotiations and peace. What I have tried to demonstrate is both the importance and the limitations of negotiation upon which lasting security and peace could be built.

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Chapter Two

U.S. Policy toward the Taliban after the 2012 Elections

John Feffer

Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 partially because of his pledge to end the war in Iraq and shift the Pentagon's attention to Afghanistan. He won a second term in part by promising to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan – as quickly and as securely as possible. There were no "mission accomplished" moments with Afghanistan. An economic crisis at home, a failure to accomplish key military metrics in Afghanistan, an increase in "green on blue" attacks, a consensus among the allied forces to withdraw, a change in U.S. public opinion, an uncomfortable alliance with the government in Kabul, a worsening relationship with Pakistan, and a shift in U.S. geopolitical orientation toward the Pacific, have all contributed to reducing the space that Afghanistan occupies on the agenda of U.S. policymakers.

Although most Washington policymakers would simply prefer that Afghanistan disappear as an American problem, they must discover a politically palatable solution regarding U.S. involvement. From the perspective of the Obama administration, the challenge for the next two years is to accomplish U.S. troop withdrawal, leave behind a small "advisory" force that largely focuses on counter-terrorism, keep a democratic government in power in Kabul, and ensure that the majority of civil society gains remain in place. Moreover, the administration appears to be strongly committed to drone attacks against Taliban leaders, a tactic that has strong support from the U.S. public. There is bipartisan consensus in Washington around these goals, though differences of opinion still exist over the

timetable, the scale of U.S. security commitments after withdrawal, and the level of development assistance.

This consensus has moved in the direction of sooner rather than later withdrawal. On the liberal side, The New York Times published a long editorial in mid-October 2012 arguing, "Prolonging the war will only do more harm." On the conservative side, Florida Republican Bill Young, who was once a major supporter of the war, abruptly changed views in September. His about-face reflects a larger change among Republican voters (US News, 2012), who have shifted in favor of more rapid withdrawal. If anything, the scandal surrounding General Petraeus has hastened the rush to the exits.

This consensus, however, does not currently extend to the question of negotiations with the Taliban. The Republican leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives blocked the proposed prisoner exchange in August 2012 that might have led to more wide-ranging negotiations. It is likely that the Republicans will continue to look at such bilateral discussions with skepticism. Influenced by its "Tea Party" faction, the Republicans have doubts about investing money in any effort in Afghanistan that resembles "nation-building." The Pentagon, meanwhile, has continued to emphasize military solutions over diplomatic/economic alternatives.

The United States believes that the Taliban will not negotiate seriously until they are in a stronger position as a result of U.S. troop withdrawal. It is not likely that they will, at that point, accept preconditions such as disarmament. It is also argued that the United States missed its opportunity to negotiate either just before Obama's "surge", or just after. In the first case, negotiations would have gone forward under the threat of significant military force. In the second case, Washington would have presumably negotiated from a position of greater strength, not unlike the strategy that Richard Holbrooke pursued, with the help of NATO and the Croatian army, in the lead up to the Dayton Accords.

In short, Washington policymakers and politicians, except for those tasked within the State Department and Pentagon, who focus exclusively on the war and post-conflict development, are

eager to forget about Afghanistan and move on to other issues. As the number of al-Qaida operatives inside the country has fallen to double digits, Afghanistan has become less a national security issue than a regional problem (though the Pentagon has resisted this narrative).

The waning prominence of Afghanistan on the agendas of U.S. policymakers and in the headlines of the media is not necessarily a bad thing. It may, in the end, boost the prospects for a negotiated settlement, either because it allows committed U.S. officials to pursue certain strategies outside the political and media limelight, or because it creates a political opportunity for other countries and institutions to strengthen their capability as mediators.

In this paper, I will evaluate three different scenarios that might take place between now and 2014. The first is Pentagon-led, the second is State Department-led, and the third is region-led. They are not entirely distinct scenarios, because elements of each may coexist. But they provide a useful way of understanding the different policy trajectories being considered in Washington at the moment.

The Wait-and-See Scenario: The Department of Defense Strategy

Given domestic resistance, the Obama Administration may decide not to invest any significant political capital into negotiations and focus instead on executing the troop withdrawals and maintaining a bilateral security relationship with Kabul. It will continue to provide assistance, though this will likely be reduced to no more than $5 billion annually. It will continue to bolster the security forces and strengthen political institutions, but this state-building effort will be at a substantially reduced financial level. It will maintain U.S. bases to conduct counterterrorism operations through the use of drones, air power, and special operations. The counterinsurgency effort, meanwhile, will diminish in importance.

In this "wait-and-see" scenario, the Pentagon will be the lead player, just as it was during the period before the "surge." The U.S. military is determined that if they can't call the Afghanistan

operation a "decisive victory", at least it won't historically be viewed as a "loss." What happens after 2014, when most U.S. troops are gone, can be effectively blamed on the Afghans themselves.

In this scenario, the Taliban remains the enemy, not just al-Qaida, though the Pentagon prefers to focus on the latter in its statements (Washington Post, 2012). In the absence of boots on the ground, drones will play a more prominent role, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has already requested a substantial increase in its arsenal (Washington Post, 2012). Those drones will continue to target Taliban leadership, despite counter-productivity for a number of reasons (adverse impact on public opinion, elimination of potential negotiation partners, etc). The Peace and Reintegration program, which has encouraged 5,000 Taliban to lay down their weapons, will continue to attract participants, though it's likely that most of these "insurgents" barely if ever participated in hostilities and were only seeking compensation. As international forces pull out, and the Taliban's influence spreads, the program will likely have diminishing returns.

Washington also appears willing to preside over the cantonment of Afghanistan in which the Afghan government maintains control over Kabul and several other major cities while the Taliban controls the countryside. An effort will be made to promote a democratic transition in the next Afghan elections. But the U.S. government has generally opted for stability over democracy in similar circumstances; thus, it will tolerate high levels of corruption in order to maintain U.S. influence on Washington's terms.

There may not be very much active support in Washington for this "wait-and-see" approach outside of the Pentagon. But in the absence of a viable alternative, Washington policymakers will rely on this default strategy of preserving the status quo.

The Wedge Scenario: The State Department Strategy

In the "wait-and-see" approach, the Taliban and al-Qaida are generally lumped together as a single adversary arrayed against

the Karzai government, coalition forces, and Western civilization. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan are similarly treated as a single entity. In the extreme versions, embraced by large sections of the Republican Party, political Islam is viewed as a threat to U.S. national interests, whether in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the protestor movement in Bahrain, or the Justice and Development Party (Adelet ve Kalkinma Partisi, or A.K.P.) in Turkey.

For the most part, the State Department has a more sophisticated approach to the Muslim world. It favors distinguishing between "good Islamists" and "bad Islamists", and attempting to drive a wedge between them. In the opening gambit in negotiations with the Taliban, for instance, the administration called on the Taliban to sever its connections with al-Qaida. This can be seen as part of a larger administration strategy that has reached out to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and recognized more generally the popular support that political Islam has throughout the Muslim world. This strategy is reflected also in recent international policy, with Taliban figures removed from the United Nations (U.N.) Sanctions List. U.N. Security Council resolutions 1988 and 1989 distinguish between the Taliban and al-Qaida.

The noted scholar Gilles Dorronsoro has elaborated this "wedge scenario" in greater detail in a 2012 report by the Carnegie Endowment. He recommends limiting drone attacks and other counterterrorism efforts to al-Qaida and similar jihadist groups. He argues that the United States must drive a wedge between the Taliban and Pakistan. And he recommends that Washington quit its plans to maintain a significant base presence in the region. Military solutions have failed to dislodge the Taliban, while nation-building efforts have failed to create a credible and durable democratic state. The United States should focus narrowly in its military objectives and prepare for the inevitable: the Taliban returning to power.

This "wedge scenario" bears a certain resemblance to geopolitical realism during the Cold War. Nixon's actions normalizing relations with China, for example, did not occur because the Republican administration believed that Chinese communism was somehow better than other forms of communism. Nor did Nixon and Kissinger

anticipate the economic value of rapprochement. Détente with China was designed primarily to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing.

In another version of this approach during the Cold War, Washington policymakers eventually came to distinguish between Communists who focused on "socialism within one country" (Yugoslavia, Euro Communists in Italy, or eventually Vietnam) and Communists who had global ambitions (the Soviet Union). The first category could be dealt with; the latter had to be opposed, by military force if necessary.

Negotiations with the Taliban have proceeded according to the same assumption. If they renounce their links to radicals that have global aspirations, such as al-Qaida, they will be invited into the negotiations. U.S. policymakers will "choose the lesser of two evils", concerning what the Taliban will do within Afghanistan in an effort to prevent the larger transnational threat of the terrorist network.

The greatest challenge to the Obama strategy for driving a wedge within political Islam, between those who focus on defensive jihad and those who champion exporting jihad, lies in Washington. The Republican opposition in Washington remains as unaccommodating toward political Islam as they were previously towards communism. The Republican Party has largely lost its Nixon wing, with the defeat of key moderates, like Richard Lugar, at the hands of the Tea Party. This hardline Republican opposition views Islam, not specifically al-Qaida, as a global enemy. It refuses to recognize the Muslim Brotherhood, much less the Taliban, as a negotiating partner. Congressional opposition to the initial negotiations with the Taliban over prisoner exchange highlighted this uncompromising stance. In general, American conservatives have expressed considerable outrage at any sign of accommodation with "radical Islam" (The Daily Beast, 2012). The earlier suggestions that Obama is a "secret Muslim" has largely become transformed into Obama "acting Muslim" through his support of these movements and political Islam (*Tomdispatch*).

This strategy, of course, depends on the willingness of the

Taliban to renounce al-Qaida and negotiate in good faith. There is considerable evidence that relations between the Taliban and al-Qaida are frayed, and the notion that the Taliban will merely wait until 2014 to come to the negotiating table is also a possibility. As Ahmed Rashid has written,

> ***"Many Taliban leaders are advocates of a political settlement rather than a bloody power grab for Kabul - because they fear a multi-dimensional civil war after 2014 which they know they cannot win when non-Pashtun groups in northern Afghanistan are now much stronger compared to the late 1990s when the Taliban last wielded power" (BBC News, 2012).***

Kitchen Sink Scenario: Regional Strategy

It is an axiom among conflict resolution specialists that a stalemate can be unlocked by adding more elements to the scope of negotiations. In this case, if the United States and the Taliban are unable to find common interests through bilateral negotiations, it might be possible to find a workable solution by regionalizing the discussions.

The regional approach to negotiating an end to the war in Afghanistan has considerable appeal in the U.S. think-tank world, but it has generated only limited interest in policymaking circles (United States Institute of Peace, 2011). The furthest the administration has ventured in this direction is the inclusion of Pakistan in its calculations (by creating the Af-Pak geographic designation, by conducting drone operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas or F.A.T.A., and by pursuing Osama bin Laden in Pakistan).

With Pakistan, the Obama Administration faces a dilemma. It remains deeply dependent on the country for supply lines to U.S. bases in Afghanistan. It provides billions of dollars in economic and military support and is desperate to ensure the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. And it is incapable of forcing Pakistan to pursue militants in the border regions and cut ties to extremists in Afghanistan.

For those who favor a regional approach, gaining Pakistan's cooperation is a crucial first step. This, as *The New York Times* editorial writers argue, can be accomplished more easily in the case of rapid withdrawal "If tens of thousands of American troops were removed from landlocked Afghanistan, that might actually allow the United States to hang tougher with Islamabad."

A key to this strategy, of course, is for the United States to temper its enthusiasm for the new relationship between Washington and New Delhi. Reducing Indo-Pakistani tensions, however, cannot be accomplished without addressing the Kashmir situation. In the same way that Richard Holbrooke negotiated a side agreement between Greece and Macedonia during the initial talks leading to the Dayton Accords, the Obama Administration should use its political capital to restart the Kashmir dialogue. Even modest confidence-building steps in that region would have a positive result in terms of lessening the Indo-Pakistani rivalry in Afghanistan.

A second key player in the regional dimension is Iran, a factor that Holbrooke recognized during his abbreviated tenure as the top diplomat in the Af-Pak region. Iran has pledged $1 billion in official assistance to Afghanistan, with $500 million already provided. But, it has also covertly supported the Taliban through training and other assistance. Given its relationships with both sides, and its traditional interest in supporting Afghan Shiites rather than Sunni Pashtuns, Tehran could play an important role in regional negotiations.

Regional negotiations must identify common interests and not just bring in additional negotiating partners for the sake of diversity. And indeed there are considerable common interests in the region, which could form the basis of negotiated agreements: on anti-narcotics (with the aid of the Russians, 2010); on counter-terrorism (which appeals to the Chinese); and, on regional energy development (which appeals to everyone in the region).

U.S. indifference can allow opportunities for other mediators. The Gulf states, and Qatar specifically, have already stepped forward in this capacity. Saudi Arabia, also, has served as a conduit between Kabul, Washington, and the Taliban, and there are rumors that Saudi Arabia could be a destination for Mullah Omar if the

Taliban leader is persuaded into exile. Also, Turkey has co-chaired the "Regional Working Group" initiative and facilitated summit meetings with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Central Asian states – particularly Tajikistan – also play an important role because of ties to ethnic groups inside Afghanistan. Tajikistan participated in the Russian-led "Quadrilateral Summits", the last being held on 18 August 2010.

But the list of potential participants should not be restricted either to countries bordering the dispute or to government representatives. The International Contact Group tasked with resolving the conflict on Mindanao has involved four countries: the United Kingdom, Japan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Importantly, there are no Southeast Asian countries in this group. Two countries, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, were chosen due to their Muslim-majority population. Also involved in the negotiations are civil society organizations in this case, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with different focuses: a regional, a peace building, a mediation, and an international Islamic. The inclusion of civil society organizations would not only bring an important level of expertise into the negotiations (mediation, peace-building), it would also allay fears that the gains made in Afghan civil society would be ignored in negotiations.

The Philippines model is instructive (United States Institute of Peace, 2011). Two of the traditional mediators for international conflicts, the United States and the United Nations, are perceived as biased in the Afghan situation. Neighboring countries also have vested interests in Afghanistan. Allowing other countries that were not involved in the coalition fighting, and have no economic or security connections to Afghanistan, would raise the confidence level of those participating in negotiations

Avoiding Default

We are currently heading toward the first scenario of the wait-and-see approach, although some elements of the wedge scenario and the regional scenario are already in place. The challenge at this point for the United States is for those in the State Department, who subscribe to a more nuanced understanding of the contending forces

and the regional dimension of the conflict, to create a compelling narrative to counter the "cut and run" impulse of Congress and the "stay and fight" impulse of the Pentagon.

The "wedge" scenario has its own drawbacks, such as a resemblance to "divide and conquer" imperial strategies. But, from the point of view of peacemaking, and the ultimate success of negotiations with the Taliban, this State Department-led approach has considerable virtues over the Pentagon's preference to continue on its current strategy.

President Obama, given his cautious approach to foreign policy matters, will likely attempt to combine drones and diplomacy. Washington will continue to attempt to negotiate from a position of strength; substituting air attacks for ground forces and fashioning the Afghan military and police into a functioning force. The State Department and the Pentagon will struggle for an advantageous position in navigating U.S. policy, but they must realize that the United States will be negotiating from a position of decreasing strength.

Much depends on factors that are currently unknown. The Obama administration will soon be replacing three vital positions: secretary of state, secretary of defense, and the director of the CIA. These three figures will play a key role in determining U.S. policy toward Afghanistan. Moreover, all of the key players behind the "surge" (Gen. David Petraeus, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of Defense and former Director of the CIA Leon Panetta, Gen. Stanley McCrystal, former Asst. Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke) have either left their office or are on the verge of leaving. In other words, there will be no institutional commitment to this military policy for reasons of personal investment.

Another unknown is the state of the economy, both globally and in the United States, and how much this issue will absorb the attention of the president and the Congress.

Finally, there are the "on the ground" factors: the political situation in Kabul, the stability of the Pakistani government, the ongoing crisis in Syria, and the escalating conflict in Gaza.

These are some considerations to keep in mind regardless of the personnel in the U.S. government, the state of the global economy, or the vicissitudes of current events.

- Taliban support is increased by foreign occupation and the corruption of the Karzai government. As the United States withdraws and Karzai's tenure elapses, Taliban support will decrease as its control of territory increases.
- Only one precondition makes sense at this point: the Taliban must renounce al-Qaida. All other preconditions are non-starters.
- Religious arguments must be abandoned. Some elements of the Taliban want to negotiate, others do not, but this has nothing to do with their interpretation, strict or liberal, of the Koran or sharia law. Negotiators should focus on underlying interests, such as: security, participation, and economic growth

In the end, we face a paradoxical situation of the two primary negotiating partners. The Taliban and the United States see support for their respective policies diminishing. Washington must grapple with decreasing troop numbers and considerably less domestic support for involvement. The Taliban will face pressures from drone attacks, attenuated Pakistani support, and challenges from forces on the ground, such as the Northern Alliance.

This could be a dangerous situation, if the "wait-and-see" scenario holds. But if those who subscribe to the "wedge" scenario succeed in shaping Afghanistan policy in Washington, and the various regional powers converge on a single negotiating framework, we might yet see a negotiated end to the Afghanistan war that does not lead to the kind of chaos that followed the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

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Chapter Three

Afghanistan through a Critical Phase

Abdul Salam Zaeef

The issue of Afghanistan is currently passing through its critical phase. Now diplomacy must be based on reality. This will put an end to the military strategy of the United States and its allies. This approach must be acceptable to all parties on the issue and ensure equal human rights. All sides should have the right of complete freedom, security, mutual respect, and have access to the rights bestowed on them by the almighty Allah (SwT). This strategy will embody an everlasting peace and continuous security. However, the glow of these aspirations seems a far cry for everyone.

In order to reach this goal, we have very important phases and great challenges ahead. Standing up to these challenges requires us to overcome a difficult phase because they complicate the issue of Afghanistan, confusing veteran statesmen worldwide. In addition, there are four essential problems that should be faced and solved:

1. The illegitimate demands of the covetous and powerful countries should be brought under a framework because they pose an unprecedented threat to justice and equality. I believe that if this problem continues unresolved, then the solution to Afghanistan will remain unattainable.
2. The demands of the neighboring countries and their concerns should be addressed.
3. Improving the political, economic, and military status of the country will play a vital role in the preservation of sovereignty and in winning the "hearts and minds" of the Afghans. These

can no longer be the instruments of foreign governments, nor in the sphere of influence.

4. A powerful regime must be restored. There is a need for a system that is acceptable to all and is free from the tentacles of the power hungry, similar to the government before the communist Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan took power. This type of system cannot be established in an environment characterized by continuous war, subjugation, and deprivation.

Since my topic touches on the talks between the Taliban and the United States, I would like to focus on this matter. However, I deem it necessary to ask if negotiations between the United States and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban) are necessary. This question caused the failure of previous attempts at negotiation. Thus, the Hamid Karzai Administration wants to find a solution to the problem of Afghanistan through talks and understanding. However, they have failed to make any spectacular headway despite huge expenditures, burgeoning governmental formation, and extensive propaganda. This is the result of the unsuccessfulness of resolving U.S. ambitions in Afghanistan. Once this challenge is confronted and resolved, we can proceed to the next phase.

There are two dimensions that play roles in Afghanistan. The first is international and the second is domestic. I believe that the Taliban considers the international problem as the most important obstacle to future talks. The second phase cannot begin until the first phase is completed, and this can be accomplished through confidence building measures.

After 2009, the United States acknowledged that they could not eliminate the Taliban through the use of force nor could they force them to agree to their terms for surrender. Thus, they searched for ways to negotiate a settlement with the Taliban. The Americans attempted indirect negotiations led by the Karzai Administration, using the Saudis, Pakistanis, and Turks, among others, to embed their demands in a political framework. However, this approach failed because the United States balked at the opportunity to talk directly with the Taliban.

First, the United States wanted the Karzai government to lead the talks to prove their legitimacy. This would cause the Taliban to have a weaker position in negotiations. But, neither the Taliban nor the Afghan people believe in the legitimacy of the Karzai government.

Second, the United States was politically divided by the notion of negotiation. The mere mention of negotiating with the Taliban becomes politically unsavory. Therefor, commencement of talks, via the Karzai Administration, was politically safer than approaching them directly. The United States could achieve their goals without the political fallout if negotiations soured. Despite these efforts, the United States concluded that the Taliban was not ready to negotiate with the Karzai Administration. The U.S. failure to secure the peace prompted them to face the reality that they needed to speak directly with the Taliban.

In my opinion, the talks were successful to an extent. In some measures, understanding existed that paved the way for confidence building. But, during the 2011 International Conference on Afghanistan, in Bonn, Karzai sabotaged the talks. The Karzai Administration feared that an American deal with the Taliban would result in their loss of power. But, their ploy failed and they achieved the opposite of what they planned.

The occupying forces were unable to obtain their objectives. After eleven years, America and its allies continue their war in Afghanistan resulting in the deaths and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. The United States failed to establish: an effective administration; peace; development; and, security. Therefore, it is imperative that we bring peace to this war-stricken country and find solutions for the issues, which the regional countries and the world harbor concerning Afghanistan. We need to address the apprehensions of the Afghan people who remember the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal and the civil war that ensued. Despite the statements from the Taliban and the Afghanistan government concerning a ceasefire agreement, foreign propaganda insists that war will continue once the United States leaves the country in 2014. Therefore, it is important to seriously evaluate these concerns and begin efforts to avoid war.

We shall not waste time and must begin the first important step quickly to create venues for implementing future phases. Unless we finish and implement the first stage, we will not be able to begin the others, which impedes progress for the United States and the Taliban. The first stage would enable a balance among Afghans.

To realize this goal, the United States must fulfill its promises to build an environment of trust. The United States needs to assure the Taliban that it will not continue its occupation under another name. The United States should not implement contracts and treaties on the people of Afghanistan through the Karzai government. It should cease these processes because it is an important issue and a challenge for the region if peace is the goal.

I believe that the Afghans should lead the negotiations, but only once the external and international factors are dealt with. Without the first step, I have little hope for peace; and the continuation of these efforts will be a waste of time, money, and other resources. Independence, mutual respect, freedom from any foreign influence, and equality is required. As long as the issue of the Taliban and the United States is not resolved, none of these things can be achieved.

After these problems are resolved, a non-partisan and independent Afghan, who is accepted by all sides of the conflict, should lead the process. There cannot be an appointed leadership by the government due to impartiality concerns. This independent negotiator should investigate and bring all aspects of the conflict within the context of Islamic and national principles. A mechanism needs to be put in place and agreed on that would assure the independence of the country and protect the rights of individuals. If the international community is truly interested in a lasting peace in Afghanistan, it should respect and support decisions made by the inter-Afghan dialogue.

Considering that time is running out before 2014, the United States, the Karzai government, the Taliban, the neighboring countries, and the international community should take the following steps:

1. The United States should change its war strategy to a peace strategy and find a solution to the conflict with the Taliban. This would allow negotiations to occur through diplomacy.

2. The Karzai government should pursue real negotiations instead of its staged negotiation theatrics. The peace process needs to be taken out of the equation of power. Real efforts need to be taken, the obstacles removed, and the Afghans must be allowed to seize the initiative.
3. The Taliban should adjust itself to the speed of world politics, recognize world affairs, and participate in this high-speed process to engage in politics.
4. The neighboring countries could play an important role. But in the current conflict they impede peace. Efforts should be made collectively to change their role in a positive direction. Afghanistan should remain neutral in regional and world affairs.
5. The international community should act as a neutral body and not allow other countries to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. It should respect the agreement reached by the Afghan-Afghan dialogue. It should assist Afghanistan in the political and economic spheres to enable it to become a self-sufficient and stable country.

Chapter Four

Afghan-Afghan Talks: The Missing Piece of the Puzzle

Alex Strick van Linschoten

There has been much discussion of negotiations with the Taliban in recent months. A large amount of meetings, in France, in Kyoto, in Doha and elsewhere, have occurred between various parties. Until very recently these meetings were creating an understanding between the Afghan Taliban and the United States. Few discussions of talks among Afghans occurred, however.

It is the contention of this paper that there is a strong need for discussions among Afghans as equal stakeholders in the conflict. In the end, there are different options proposed for the negotiation framework, but these mainly come down to variations of two main elements: talks among Afghans, and talks between Afghans and the foreign nations. The Taliban have adopted this framework when they discuss talks in their public statements.

In many ways, the discussions that need to take place among Afghans are more important for the potential for peace in Afghanistan than those occurring between the Taliban and the United States.

Where are we now?

In terms of the military conflict, we are at a stalemate. In some places, the violence has decreased and conditions are better than in previous years. This applies, for example, to Kandahar. There is no sense that this will be permanent, however, or that people believe in a promising future. Leaving the country is still a preferred solution

for many people.[1] My assessment is that this is only a temporary lull, and that when foreign troops leave the country in 2014, then their situation will deteriorate.

There are some places where violence continues, however. Civilians continue to get caught in the crossfire. Meanwhile, Kabul remains subject to occasional attacks within its city limits.

Moreover, there are many actors in this conflict. Among the armed opposition groups, there are many somewhat autonomous groups operating around Afghanistan. This makes understanding the situation quite difficult for researchers and civilians.[2]

The same is true with the government and its affiliates. For all the centralization built into the plan for Afghanistan, since 2001, their government's representatives are also somewhat autonomous entities. There is significant political diversity within the government, and you can distinguish between the positions taken between the different political groupings. Now there are also individual militias that American forces have set up around the country. It is difficult to bring all of these different groups together to the negotiating table.

Others have mentioned some of the background to what is currently happening with negotiations. In summary, there have been some meetings, but relatively few results. The office has been established in Qatar following significant efforts over several years prior to its opening. There have been preliminary meetings among the Taliban representatives, but nothing to bring us closer to solving the substantive issues.

For the purposes of this meeting and this presentation, it is worth adding that there has still been relatively little discussion among Afghans. The priority has been to set up a single credible track of negotiations between the Taliban and the United States.

Some instability has been seen in recent months from within

1 http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/liveblog/wp/2013/01/30/as-2014-nato-pullout-approaches-more-afghans-flee-their-homeland/ (accessed February 3, 2013).

2 http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/gregg_sep_tal_alqaeda.pdf (accessed February 5, 2013).

the Taliban. The movement is fairly solid as an idea, but less in practical terms where the tolls of time and attrition have been displayed. Differences of attitude and perspective have started to show in public, whereas in the past they were much less conspicuous. They relate to the full spectrum of issues that you might expect: approaches to strategies of warfare; ideological differences; and power struggles within the senior leadership that will only increase post-2015. There are other groups affiliated with the Taliban and problems have also started to develop amongst them.

Those advocating a political solution to the Afghan conflict within the Taliban are in the minority. Negotiations, therefore, are conducted on a much more fragile basis than is often assumed. Those on the Taliban team in Qatar participate at a considerable personal risk.

What is coming?

The period of time between now and 2014 is filled with the possibility of future complications. The 2014 U.S. presidential elections loom high above attempts to continue to stabilise the political system. Their success or failure will depend on how they are handled, but they hold the potential for serious internal issues in Afghanistan. The international community is seemingly confused about how to behave or respond, while the potential for positive change exists once Karzai is replaced.

Continued conflict seems likely for the next two years. The fragmentation and issues within the Taliban will be complicated for unaffiliated or unconnected Afghans to navigate. This reality makes it difficult to create or nurture some kind of vision for Afghanistan that extends beyond the everyday survival that is common among Afghans. Seeing this, people will continue to flee the country posing problems for future generations.

Transition plans, according to the International Security Assistance Force (I.S.A.F.), mean that a significant military withdrawal will take place during this period as well. There are some serious doubts about the ability of Afghan government army forces to ensure security around the country post-2015. Warlords

and others, including members of the Afghan government, are openly stating that rearmament is necessary.[1]

Afghan-Afghan Talks

The framework for talks among Afghans is focused internationally. It was established to secure American objectives, not necessarily for peace within Afghanistan.[2]

Among Afghan groups, there is reluctance to participate, or initiate, dialogue between themselves and the Taliban due to the fear of giving them legitimacy. Especially in previous years when these actions would have been seen less favourably by other Afghans and by the United States. Now that the climate has changed, it is easier for Afghan political actors to commit to negotiations.

American officials stated that they hope that the track of U.S.-Taliban talks, as found in Qatar and elsewhere, will eventually lead to negotiations amongst all Afghans. Some suggest that the main obstacles preventing a discussion of internal Afghan issues are the external powers present in the country. Before you can include all Afghan parties to the talks, the United States must convince the Taliban of their sincerity to compromise, otherwise, negotiations without either party would be pointless. There are also suggestions that the United States could act as a spoiler and interfere in the Afghan internal peace settlement if it fails to acknowledge the Taliban as a political movement.

None of these arguments make much sense, especially due to time considerations. The conflict, after all, is not just one of political vision, but it includes social and cultural values. I will return to this point below when I discuss the kinds of discussions that need to be happening among Afghans.

Why these talks should be a priority

These talks are essential for Afghan stability. An agreement between the Taliban and the United States will not preclude the possibility

1 http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/8172-formation-of-mujahedeen-military-unit-is-underway-ismail-khan- (accessed February 5, 2013).

2 This is expected and hoped to be a corollary by key US political actors, but the primary American concern is for their own objectives.

of civil war between the Taliban and the former Northern Alliance after 2014. This is something that the Qatar process so far has not addressed, but it remains as one of the key points.

If we assume that the Taliban presently exists because the United States and its coalition have a military presence in Afghanistan, then perhaps these direct talks might be more significant. There are, however, internal reasons for the present conflict, reasons that would continue to exist if you were to remove all the foreign troops from Afghanistan tomorrow. The U.S.-Taliban talks in Doha failed to address internal disputes over governance, or broader socio-religious disputes. On 1 January 2015, Afghans will have to deal with those issues on their own.[1]

A strong, stable Afghanistan requires this internal conversation. Without these talks, Afghanistan will experience another civil war reminiscent of the bloodbath that ensued when these discussions did not take place prior to the Soviet withdrawal. Different visions of Afghanistan's political and social future ended up getting caught in the clashes over power that followed the withdrawal of the Soviet forces.

Key issues addressed by Afghan-Afghan talks

Issues that Afghan-Afghan talks should address include the following:

1. Islam and Society: There are significant differences of approach among Islamic societies with regard to the role of Islam in public, political, and private life. The Taliban have strong views that are opposed or rejected by other groups living in Afghanistan. These kinds of issues should be discussed among interested parties. This conversation needs to occur among peers, excluding the United States, who would not be in the position to contribute to the Afghan debate on political Islam.[2]

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1 This is not to say that many Afghans have not been handling these issues among themselves prior to this date, but the presence of the United States sometimes made it easy to ignore these kinds of problems.

2 Nor, needless to say, should an American negotiating team necessarily have much say in matters of internal Afghan society.

2. Government / Governance: This is perhaps the most important discussion that needs to take place, one that involves power and its distribution. It has been a fundamental issue of post-2001 Afghanistan, and it was something I heard repeatedly from people in southern Afghanistan. People said that they wanted the ability to control their own areas meaning less interference from the central government in local political decisions. Possible questions for discussion include:

    a. Who gets to rule the country not only at the national level, but also at the provincial and district level?

    b. How much influence do local people have on the government in their districts and villages?

    c. How will the different groups find a balance between their ambitions and desire for more power and influence, and what is the correct way for that balance to be contested. In other words, is there somewhere where these disputes can be settled with non-military means?

3. Jihad: There are different attitudes to this word, depending on who you are, where you come from, and your educational and social background. Many parties in Afghanistan claim that theirs is the "true jihad". There has been a clear failure to bring the different groups together to discuss what this actually means, and what it will mean for their children going forward. Many of the key parties to the current conflict in Afghanistan are educated, so there is the possibility for this discussion to take place at the same level.

4. Foreigners: This is clearly an issue that the U.S.-Taliban talks will address from the perspective of the majority of the armed opposition, but it should also be discussed among Afghans. What is the role of foreigners and their aid? Many Afghans not involved in the armed opposition believe that foreign aid money has fuelled corruption. Does that mean that they should stop this aid completely? What can this foreign aid be used for in the future, and in what form should it come? What is the role of foreign Non Governmental Organizations (N.G.O.s) and outside

donors and the presence of these organizations after 2015?

5. Outside Interference: There is an important discussion that needs to occur on the dangers of outside interference where Afghans are manipulated by external countries or other groups. This is particularly important in an environment where some Afghan groups accuse the Taliban of being proxies for Pakistan.

Past Experience

Similar engagements in the past show the value of having discussions with internal parties. A series of meetings in Doha two years ago by different Somali groups and mediated by mutually respected religious authorities, such as Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, brought positive results. Those involved in the meetings found them extremely useful in creating a shared sense of purpose.

Inside Afghanistan, there have been some cases of cooperation between the Taliban and other Afghan groups. In the field of education, the Taliban worked together with the Ministry of Education on textbook reform. Sometimes the Taliban and Afghan government education delegates will conduct inspections of schools together. The demand from local communities prompted the action. The Taliban were forced to adapt to the realities on the ground.

With healthcare, the Taliban have historically supported the polio campaign. Mullah Mohammad Omar issued letters of authorisation granting permission for vaccinations. This tentative support may have been damaged by the U.S. use of this campaign as cover for their attempt to identify bin Laden in the Abbottabad compound. There are other instances where neutral projects are given access and support from the Taliban. Senior figures within the organization, such as Mullah Mohammad Abbas, have issued statements in support of this principle that education and health projects should be protected.

There are many instances of cooperation with local communities. For example, in Kandahar a Taliban offensive was once postponed because farmers needed help with the grape harvest. Fighters put

down their guns and helped out.[1]

At meetings in Paris and Kyoto in 2012, Afghans had a chance to interact with each other and apparently were successful, and the constituencies of the various groups involved, including the Taliban were supportive. Of course, these are extremely small steps, but they are examples where Afghans talking with each other can lead to positive results and effects.

A recent speech, by former mujahideen leader Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, challenged the ulama to provide an Islamic justification for the use of suicide bombers. A lengthy statement by the Taliban followed these two days later. This was the first time that the Taliban had been forced into issuing a religious justification for their use and support of the tactic, citing hadith and also Islamic scholars that they rely on for precedent. It was one of the first occasions that we had a discussion of the real issues involved, and one among the various parties to the conflict; although, the issue of suicide bombers was dropped as a subject matter.[2]

Conclusion

Afghan-Afghan talks are urgently needed in this period prior to the exit of the majority of international military forces. They are also useful in solidifying the political discussion. When you have to justify or argue your position in public, you sometimes realize things about the positions that you are taking. It can give perspective to be confronted by different attitudes. Peace for Afghanistan will only happen once discussions occur among Afghans that address the major issues among them. A failure to do so will only have negative consequences for the future moving forward.

1 Note that this was different from the normal hiatus that takes place during harvest season, where this happens across rural Afghanistan.

2 http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=3233 (accessed February 5, 2013).

Chapter Five

War and Peace in Afghanistan: A Tajik view

Hashmattollah Moslih

It is important to analyze the past to understand the best path and means to shape the future.

However, sadly, in the case of Afghanistan, the historical considerations have been ignored. The result has been a constant, miserable existence and without correction, the future will be more of the same. Afghanistan is on the path of disintegration along ethnic and tribal lines. The disintegration of Afghanistan will be violent and it will result in the disintegration of Pakistan and eventually Iran and Iraq. The fires of disintegration may even blow northwards and engulf Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, since these countries are a mosaic of ethnicities and tribes.

On 6 October 2001, on the eve of the invasion of Afghanistan, President Bush stated in a radio address, "Following World War II, America fed and rebuilt Japan and Germany, and their people became some of our closest friends in the world." However, a decade later, Afghanistan is first on the list of the most corrupt countries and the third poorest nation in the world. With the exception of major highways, which are needed for military purposes, Afghanistan remains entirely underdeveloped, and U.S.-Afghan relations have suffered.

Today more than 25 countries from around the world are involved in the task of building Afghanistan. But the question is, "In whose image should Afghanistan be built?" Should Afghanistan

be in the image of Pakistan or India, or should it have an Anglo-American image? Should Afghanistan turn to the East or to the West? Should it embrace Islam or secularism? If it chooses Islam, should it be Shia or Sunni; and, if it chooses secularism, should it be capitalism or socialism?

The crisis of direction is further complicated with a lack of consensus at the national level. "Who are we" and "in whose image do we declare ourselves a nation?" Should we be a Pashtun nation with other minorities acting as satellites orbiting around a strong Pashtun, central government?

Or should we be a nation of Tajiks, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, and the remaining ethnicities in a federal system? The answers to these questions are the root cause of the political divisions and war in Afghanistan, because the answers would have far reaching, social, political, and economic consequences for all the stakeholders in the conflict.

Much has been written about the Taliban and their Pashtun origin and struggle to power, but little has been written or said about the other major player, the Tajiks. I will present a Tajik view of war and peace in Afghanistan, and contextualize the conflict in the light of its history.

Afghanistan's History

Afghanistan is a landlocked mountainous country. It has an ethnically diverse population with separate cultures and languages. Although there has never been an independent and complete census, it is agreed that the population division is: Pashtuns 42%, Tajiks 32%, Uzbeks 8% Hazaras 8% Baluch 2%, Turkmen 4% and the Pashai, Nuristani, Arab, Brahui, Pamiri, Gujjar, and others 4%. These figures are disputed by the Pashtuns who claim a higher majority.

The geography of Afghanistan remains an obstacle for social interaction and assimilation. Over the course of history, the people of Afghanistan have been isolated from one another. Cities have emerged as the main point of interaction and intermarriage between the ethnicities. Since more than 80% of the population lives in the

rural communities, a modern, cosmopolitan population fails to emerge.

However, governments, for political reasons, have tried to portray a culturally homogenous and politically united image of the country; the truth is far from it. Afghanistan is neither culturally homogenous nor politically united, in fact, it is a mosaic of cultures, ethnicities and tribes, and above all, it is a country of minorities. There is no single ethnic or tribal majority. Lack of appreciation of this fact, by various governments and political parties, means that for much of its modern history, Afghanistan has been in political turmoil. Successive governments have tried to engineer a false reality of Afghanistan. Failure is the result. In short, the war in Afghanistan centers on identity. Different ethnic and religious groups, tribes and political denominations, have tried to build an Afghanistan in their image, which has often been at the expense of others.

At the regional level, Afghanistan's neighbors are also mosaics of cultures, ethnicities and tribes. Since the neighboring countries are locked in a regional competition for dominance, they also manipulate the ethnic and tribal diversity of Afghanistan. Each neighboring country, as well as the major global powers, would also like to build an Afghanistan in their image, or at least an Afghanistan that will suit their needs.

Internally, the root cause of the war in Afghanistan is the Pashtun desire for supremacy over the remaining tribal groups, especially the Tajiks, which has locked the two major minorities in war. Here I would like to briefly introduce the Tajiks and the Pashtuns before outlining the historic dispute between these two peoples.

Tajiks

Tajiks live in modern day Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, Tajiks are scattered in the north, east and west of the country. All 99% of Tajiks in Afghanistan are Sunni and a majority of them adhere to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. 1% of Tajiks are Shiah-Qazilbash. Tajiks speak Dari,

the language of the people of Afghanistan prior to Islam. Dari is exactly the same as Farsi; in fact it is the classic form of Farsi. The language of Dari first originated in Khorasan and Mawara-an-nahr (Transoxiana) and spread throughout the region.

However, many people, particularly in the Arab world, mistakenly believe that Farsi is the language of the Persians, which spread to Afghanistan by the Shia sect. This view is completely wrong, modern Dari emerged during the rule of the Taherian Dynasty (821-872) in Khorasan. In fact, Abu Abdullah Jafar ibn Mohammad Rudaki (858 -941) is known as the father of modern day Farsi/Dari language. Rudaki was born in Panjrud, a village located in Panjakent, now in modern day Tajikistan. His fame made him the most celebrated poet of Khorasan, the "land of sunrise", that encompassed a vast territory that included most of modern day Afghanistan. The Muslims liberated Khorasan from idolatry in 650 A.D. Over the course of history, many governments and kingdoms emerged in Khorasan, which took their names after the ruling family or king. Territories being named after the ruling class or family had been a norm in the distant past. The Taherian (821-872), Safarian (872-910), and Samanian (882-999) are dynasties that ruled Khorasan.

For the first time in history, in 1801, the British, in a treaty with Iran referred to Khorasan as Afghanistan. The name Afghanistan is made of two words, "Afghan" and "istan". The name Afghan, Awghan, Patan, Paktoun and Pashtun are synonymous. The word "istan" is a Dari word and in its proper pronunciation is "ustan", meaning "province"; thus, the name "Afghan-Ustan" means the "province of Afghans". The historic province of Afghans has been south of Suleiman Mountains to the River Sind. Over the course of history, these Afghan tribes have moved north to modern day Afghanistan. Some Afghan historians claim that they are one of the lost tribes of Israel; they refer to the book Makhzan Afghani authored by Khwajah Nematullah Herawi, in 1962, which claims Afghans are a Jewish tribe. However, historians dispute these claims. But, it remains a mystery why some mountains and mountain passes in this region have names that are tied to Jewish history, such as Suleiman Mountains and Khyber Pass.

Afghans or Pashtuns speak Pashto. This language has many Persian words and is classified as an Indo-Iranian. Pashtuns are Sunni and from the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. Although they adhere to Hanafi, they also follow their tribal law known as "Pashtun-wali". When settling disputes they give the parties in the dispute a choice between sharia, or Islamic law, and Pashtun-wali. Most tribes often settle disputes by following Pashtun-wali codes, which at times violate sharia.

It is important to note that the reason why we cannot find a country called Afghanistan on the maps prior to 1831 is because it did not exist. Afghanistan was once Khorasan, which at times was ruled by different dynasties. After the death of Nadir Afshar Ahmad Khan Abdali, in 1747, a Pashtun serving in the Persian army capitalized on the power vacuum, ventured to Kandahar, and declared himself "king". He was known as Ahmad Shah Abdali. He viewed himself as the "King of Khorasan". However, by 1842, the first war between Afghanistan and Britain had ignited. The British continued to refer to the former Khorasan as "Afghanistan". Throughout its colonial attempts, Britain was aided by willing Pashtun kings who sought power over sovereignty. The last war occurred in 1919, and as a result the Afghans and the British signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi. This followed its third failed attempt at colonization. With its passage, the Afghan government took control of its foreign affairs, and full sovereignty was reestablished. Amanullah Khan victoriously seized the throne.

King Khan was also a Pashtun and he inherited the throne from his father Amir Habibullah Khan. He began a campaign of modernization and drafted a constitution that was passed by a Loya Jirga, or "Grand Assembly". Since the 1700s, Loya Jirga has become a political tool for the governments to give their policies a cloak of legitimacy, much like a shura council. Khan also declared that women must remove their hijab and men must wear western clothing. Failure to abide by the new laws was punishable by a fine. He also unveiled his wife to the astonishment of the people. Khan ruled Afghanistan from 1919-1929 and during this period he began a plan of nation building in the image of European countries.

Since Europe was caught in the fever of nationalism, Khan

also embraced nationalistic policies; he was the first Pashtun king to openly declare a policy of strengthening the use of the Pashto language in the country.

However, Khan's reforms were rejected by the people and sparked rebellions in various regions of the country. A Tajik man called Habibullah Kalakani led one rebellion. He was from the village of Kalakan in the north of Kabul. Kalakani managed to defeat Khan's army. He fled to Kandahar City to the south of the country, and his brother Enayatullah Khan took the throne; but after only three days, he abdicated to Kalakani. On 19 January 1929, for the first time in almost 200 years, a Tajik had become the ruler of Afghanistan. Kalakani declared himself "Amir Habibullah Khadem den Rasulallah", or "the servant of the religion of the messenger of Allah". He abolished all the laws that contradicted Islam, and within nine months, printed money and took control of the country. However, since he was Tajik, the Pashtun elites and the families of previous Pashtun kings did not accept him. Amanullah Khan and his cousins Mohammed Nadir Khan and Mohammed Hashim Khan conspired and led a rebellion of Pashtun tribes against Kalakani and attacked Kabul.

On 15 October 1929, after only nine months, the government of Kalakani collapsed leading to his withdrawal to the north of Kabul. Mohammed Nadir Khan then declared himself king and sent a delegation of religious scholars and tribal elders to Kalakani urging him to surrender. He was promised that sharia would be established and he and his men would be spared. An agreement was written on the back of a Qur'an and signed by Kahn. Kalakani agreed and surrendered. But, the king hanged him and his brother and displayed them in public. To compound the atrocity, they were then shot. Pictures of this dreadful event are available on the Internet.

King Kahn was later assassinated by Abdul-Khaliq during a ceremony in his palace on 8 November 1933. Abdul-Khaliq was arrested, dismembered, and displayed in public. During the rule of Mohammed Khan, a systematic plan to replace the language of Tajiks and other minorities to Pashto had begun. Interior Minister

Mohammed Gul Khan Mohmand was commissioned to "Pashtonize" the country. He began a program of Pashtun settlements in northern Afghanistan. Important civil institutions as well as some localities and border passes were also given Pashtun names.

Today, there are many Pashtun enclaves in northern Afghanistan that have become a safe haven for the Taliban. Those who settled in the north are called "naqileen", meaning "the relocated ones". Successive Pashtun governments have tried to "Pashtonize" the country by seizing land belonging to the people of the north and giving it to fellow Pashtuns.

After the assassination of Mohammed Khan in 1933, his son Mohammed Zahir, age 19, was declared king. The 1930s were a period of nationalism and the rise of Adolph Hitler's Germany. The ideas of a pure race, single language, and national identity were on the rise. Like-minded people in Afghanistan were attracted to this notion of state building. It is during this period that modern Pashtun nationalism took shape. However, with the defeat of Nazi Germany and the failure to change the language of Afghanistan from Dari/ Farsi to Pashto, aggressive "Pashtonization" of Afghanistan subsided.

Zahir ruled Afghanistan for forty years. During his rule, he began a policy of democratization. In this period, various political parties were established, however, his cousin, Mohammed Daoud Khan, overthrew him in a coup in 1973.

Daoud then declared the first Afghan Republic. The Communist party aided his rise to power. The Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan (P.D.P.A.) was divided along the Tajik-Pashtun line, whereas the Khalq ("Masses") faction was predominantly Pashtun, the Parcham ("Flag") faction was composed of Tajiks. In 1978, the Khalq led a successful coup against Daoud, after he began firing members of the Communist party from his government. This coup was the beginning of Soviet intervention and ultimate occupation of Afghanistan. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a devastating blow to Afghanistan's development. Subsequently, the occupation broke the state control over the people and all ethnic groups quickly armed and militarized.

In 1992, when the West was busy dealing with the aftermath of Soviet collapse in Eastern Europe, the Khalq also collapsed. One of the reasons for this collapse was the Tajik-Pashtun divide. After the failed coup in Moscow, in August 1991, the Soviet Union fell into political turmoil and their aid to the Communist government in Afghanistan dwindled. Furthermore, Washington and Moscow signed an agreement, on 1 January 1992, that stopped all weapon supplies to the warring factions in Afghanistan. Moreover, Moscow announced that it was no longer able to subsidize the Afghan economy by sending food and fuel. It also announced the withdrawal of its advisors from Afghanistan.

The last card left for the Khalq government to play was Pashtun nationalism. Top Tajik and Uzbek generals were replaced by Pashtun generals, which led to General Abdul Rashid Doustom's, an Uzbek militia member, defection to the mujahidin. His move was a major blow to the Khalq. The northern roads fell under the control of the mujahidin, effectively cutting off the Soviet supply lines.

The mujahidin were also divided into Tajik and Pashtun parties. Burhanuddin Rabbani headed the Tajik Jamiat-e Islami, while Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e Islami was Pashtun. Both parties had many followers from other tribes and ethnic groups. When the government collapsed, its Pashtun faction sided with the Hizb-e Islami, and the Tajiks supported the Jamiat-e Islami. Once again, a Tajik came to power. Jamiat-e Islami had taken control of the capital, including most cities in the north and west.

A six-month, interim government was established. It was agreed that for the initial two months, Sibghatullah Mujadidi, the leader of a small, mujahidin party (Afghan National Liberation Front), would be the interim president. Rabbani followed Mujadidi as president. Although, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had signed the agreement and was appointed prime minister, he did not enter Kabul to assume his duties. Instead, he claimed that General Doustom, a Communist, should be eliminated from the government. He also questioned the worthiness of Sibghatullah Mujadidi as a president. A devastating war erupted and various factions entered parts of Kabul. The capital became a war zone and thousands of rockets and artillery were fired into Kabul. During the hostilities, Hizb-e Wahdat, a pro-

Iranian and Shiite party, entered to the west of Kabul. As a result, Kabul became a divided and heavily militarized city.

The government opposition constantly called for the resignation of President Rabbani. However, the president argued that he would only resign if a council elected a successor. Rabbani feared that if he resigned, and an alternative president was not in place, the country would lose its last thread of international legitimacy and disintegrate. In January 1993, the government convened a council called "Shorahe Halwa Aqd". This council unanimously re-elected Rabbani as the president. Hizb-e Islami and Ali Mazari's Hizb-e Wahdat rejected this judgment. Mazari was an Iranian protégé.

In January 1994, Hekmatyar made a pact with General Doustom, Mujadidi, and Mazari to fight and depose the government of the mujahidin. They called their new pact "Shorahe Hamahangee" (Coordinating Council). They launched a coup with the aid of General Doustom. However, Ahmad Shah Massoud, the defense minister, discovered the coup attempt with the help of his intelligence apparatus. The government was prepared and in a devastating war, approximately 1,500 of General Doustom's militia members were defeated and driven out of Kabul. Simultaneously, Hekmatyar's forces attacked Kabul and were also driven back. By mid-1996, they besieged the mujahidin government and managed to decisively defeat Hezb-e Wahdat in western Kabul. For the first time since 1992, Kabul was under the full control of the government.

However, as various attempts to defeat the mujahidin government failed, a new force, supported by Pakistan, was taking shape in southern Afghanistan. Throughout the war, the mujahidin government accused Pakistan of interfering in the affairs of Afghanistan. Hizb-e Islami was Pakistan's favorite ally during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Therefore, Hizb-e Islami was promoted by Pakistan in the Arab and Islamic world as the preferred party in Afghanistan.

Pakistan and the Rise of the Taliban

In the 1980s, ideas of creating a confederation between Afghanistan and Pakistan with a new name "Islamistan" were floated amongst the population. There are around 38 million Pashtuns living in

Pakistan, while the Pashtuns of Afghanistan amount to more than 15 million. If the two countries were to enter into some type of union, the Pashtuns, with a population of around 53 million, would be strategically positioned in the heart of the new country "Islamistan". Whether this scenario was a real option or not, Pakistan views Afghanistan as its sphere of dominance, its "strategic depth" against India. This allows the Pakistanis an escape in the event that Pakistan is overrun. If we were to accept the existence of an agreement between Hekmatyar and Pakistan for the creation of a confederation, it would make sense for Pakistan to fuel a war to weaken Afghanistan before it entered into a union with it.

Pakistan also has a population problem. On one hand, it needs a big population to counter India. On the other hand, its landmass cannot accommodate a large population. In a nuclear war, Pakistan would be annihilated, but India would somehow survive a nuclear war given both its landmass and its population. Apart from the Indian question, Pakistan feared the emergence of a united and heavily armed Afghanistan, pumped with pride from defeating a super power.

Prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, nationalist Pashtun-Afghans were claiming that the tribal belt of Pakistan, which is also locally known as "Pashtunistan", belongs to Afghanistan. To create an Afghanistan in the image of Pashtuns, they needed to become an absolute majority. The key to achieving this is to unite all Pashtuns. In fact, when Pakistan was voted into the United Nations, in 1948, the Afghan government had officially objected.

Since the partition of India, Pakistani Pashtuns argued for an autonomous province called "Pashtunistan". In fact, the Afghan government named a prominent intersection in front of the presidential palace "Pashtunistan", in order to incite Islamabad. The state radio proceeded by beaming nationalistic songs singing in Pashto "Da Pashtunistan zamong" ("Pashtunistan is ours").

For Pakistan, two options were available to deal with the issue of Pashtunistan. One option was a confederation with a weak Afghanistan. The other option was to establish a Pashtun homeland with a weak government in Afghanistan. This would extinguish the

Pashtun urge for creating a homeland in Pakistan. In both scenarios, Pakistan wanted Afghanistan to be in its "sphere of dominance" in the region. But the Tajiks are obstacles to Pakistani interests. The Tajiks support a Pakistani homeland for Pashtuns. If this homeland were created, Pashtun nationalists in Afghanistan would no longer be able to claim their ownership of Afghanistan. This would immediately lead to the argument over the preferred name of the country: Afghanistan or Khorasan?

Iran also opposed the establishment of a strong Sunni government that is the product of jihad on their border. A Sunni-Persian speaking government adherent to sharia, beaming Sunni teachings on its radio and television, both accessible by the Iranians, was perceived as a threat. Iran's rulers have always been jealous of any Islamic revolution or government in the Muslim world. They believe the doctrine of "velayat-e faqih", or guardianship of the jurisprudent; thus, the grand ayatollah is the only leader of the Shia. Therefore, Iran also supported its Shia allies to fight the mujahidin's government in Afghanistan.

The Mujahidin government in its early days secretly helped the mujahidin of Tajikistan and sent weapons to Sudan. Furthermore, Ahmad Shah Massoud prevented the handover of some of the mujahidin to the Egyptian government. Instead, he encouraged the Arab mujahidin to voluntarily leave Afghanistan and not take part in the messy war that had engulfed the country. All these activities were alarming to the United States who saw these activities as the initial steps to exporting jihad to other parts of the Islamic world.

At the propaganda level, Pakistan had painted a different image of the mujahidin government, and especially of Massoud, in the Arab and Islamic world. In the Gulf region, the Tajiks were introduced as Shia/Farsi speakers. The Mujahidin government was said to be pro-Iran, this is despite the fact that they had fought the Shia party. It has been propagated that Massoud was also Shia. We believe that this misinformation campaign has been a systematic policy by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (I.S.I.) utilizing Pashtun nationalists throughout the Islamic world. Pakistan has deep historic, social, and political roots in the Gulf. Hundreds of

thousands of Pakistanis, both from Pashtun origin and other ethnic backgrounds, work in the Gulf region and are very influential to public opinion. Because of this phenomenon, the opinion of the ummah, especially among Arabs, was against the mujahidin, thus isolating the fragile government in Afghanistan.

As mentioned earlier, by 1996, despite all difficulties, the mujahidin government was slowly gaining the upper hand, but by this time, a new force was endorsed by the I.S.I.: the Taliban. This group was created in 1994, and a year later they took control of Kandahar City. In Pashto, Dari, and Arabic, Taliban translates to "students". The Taliban entered Afghanistan from Pakistan and were religious students in their madrasas. These students were the children of the Afghan refugees. They were encouraged to go to Afghanistan and fight lawlessness. How these students of the Qur'an learned to operate weapons, artillery, tanks, helicopters, and jetfighters is a question I leave to the Taliban leadership to answer. But we know that Pakistani military personnel and former Communist military officers of the Khalq faction in Afghanistan accompanied the Taliban. Local and tribal commanders, who were previously involved in looting and extortion, also joined the ranks of the Taliban. They became an umbrella group for Pashtun unity.

Initially, it was propagated amongst the Pashtun tribes that the Taliban are the army of the former King Mohamed Zahir. As a result, the Taliban managed to gain the support of the ordinary Pashtuns who were disillusioned with their new leaders who failed to take over Kabul. When the former king's son in-law, General Abdul Wali, visited Pakistan and met with Pakistan's President Farooq Laghari, on 2 July 1995, this assumption was strengthened. The Taliban entered the political landscape of Afghanistan as a substitute to the failed attempts of other Pakistani-backed parties and commanders to depose the mujahidin government from Kabul.

On the other hand, the mujahidin government was under enormous pressure. From 1 April – 9 April 1995, in central Taloqan and many other locations in the province of Badakhshan in the north were ferociously bombed by the Russian jet fighters in retaliation for the support given to the Tajikistani mujahidin by the

government in Kabul. The Taliban invaded Herat City in the west, 5 September 1995. Thousands of people in Kabul attacked the Pakistani embassy setting it aflame. One diplomat was killed and nine others injured, including the ambassador. Diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan ceased shortly afterward.

Pakistan began a diplomatic offensive to pave the way for the victory of the Taliban. Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Uzbekistan and Iran in an attempt to assure them that the Taliban would not threaten their interests in the region. General Doustom visited Pakistan on 8 February 1996.

Mullah Omar was declared the leader of the Taliban on 4 April 1996. He had gone to the main mosque of Kandahar City, known as "Kharqah". It is believed that the cloak of the messenger of Allah Mohammed (p.b.u.h.) is in a box in this mosque. Mullah Omar took this cloak, and while standing on the roof of the mosque, he showed it to the people. The Pashtuns believed that when Mullah Omar raised the cloak of the Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h.), God was ordaining him to lead his people. According to rumors, Mullah Omar had a dream where the Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h.) ordered him to rise against the injustices. The ceremony of the raising of the cloak is the only occasion where a picture of Mullah Omar was taken.

Four days after this event, Robin Raphel, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs, visited Kabul and forwarded a peace plan to Rabbani and Massoud. Raphel advised them to enter into a coalition with the Taliban and accept a peace plan. In a video on YouTube, Massoud stated, "After years of war, now we know that the Taliban are the foot soldiers of America, because America has entered into negotiations with us on behalf of the Taliban... if our resistance collapses, it would be the end of the Mujahidin in Afghanistan...."

However, the propaganda machine of Pakistan had portrayed a "saint-like" image of the Taliban, as "pure, Islamic fighters for Allah". There is no doubt that most of the early foot soldiers of the Taliban, who were the students of the Qur'an, had good intentions. However, their leadership was always in the hands of Pakistan, who

presented the Taliban to the U.S. government as the best option for a stable Afghanistan. As the Taliban consolidated their control over much of the country, U.S. companies had begun business negotiations with the Taliban on constructing the Trans Afghanistan Pipeline, T.A.P.I., which crossed Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indian. Unocal Petroleum Company invested $40 million in the Taliban.

Kabul fell to the Taliban on 27 September 1996. The first move of the Taliban was to enter the U.N. compound where the former Communist President Mohammed Najibullah sought refuge. Najibullah was killed and his body was hung from a traffic post. In part, the killing of Najibullah was a smoke screen designed to make the ordinary Muslims believe that this was the end of the Communist government, whereas it had actually collapsed in 1992. Headlines read "Taliban capture Kabul and Kill the Communist president" was propaganda for the Taliban in the Islamic world.

The Taliban continued their war against the mujahidin and began to refer to them as the "Northern Alliance". In fact, there never existed a political entity officially calling itself the Northern Alliance. What existed was a political and military alliance between the deposed Mujahidin government headed by Rabbani and other political and tribal parties in Afghanistan. They called themselves "United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan".

Throughout these wars, the Taliban claimed that they follow the Qur'an, yet clearly states:

> ***"And if two parties of believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them. And if one party of them does wrong to the other, you must fight that which does wrong till it returns unto the ordinance of Allah; then, if it returns, make peace between them justly, and act equitably. Lo! Allah loves the equitable. 9 The believers are nothing but brothers of one another. Therefore, make peace between your brethren and observe your duty to Allah that you may obtain mercy."10***

However, the Taliban came and attacked all parties in Afghanistan and created a new group. They did not make peace

between anyone. They did not follow the instructions of the Qur'an. The Taliban have always been a traditional tribal movement, had it not been for their affiliation with al-Qaida, the Taliban would have soon been exposed in the Arab and Muslim world for what they really are, tribal.

The United States never had a problem with the Taliban before 9/11. On the one hand, the Taliban were good for business; and on the other hand, they were a perfect excuse for "Islam-bashing" Christian missionaries, who argued that Islam is "anti-women" and "anti-development". The Taliban did not have a foreign policy that challenged the interests of the United States and its allies in the region. They were too busy consolidating Pashtun domination over the entire country.

Before capturing Kabul, the Taliban had not fought a real battle against the hardened mujahidin. Most of their conquest was achieved through financial bribes to tribal elders and local commanders. But when the Taliban faced the mujahidin, it was a different game. Thousands of Taliban fighters were killed and as a result, the Taliban adopted a "scorched earth" policy. They drove the local population out of their homes and farms and burned them to the ground.

As the Taliban captured southern Afghanistan, al-Qaida bases were overtaken. The relationship of Taliban and al-Qaida was accidental. But this accidental relationship proved to be a blessing in disguise for the people of Afghanistan. Al-Qaida's attack on the United States destroyed U.S.-Taliban relations. The Taliban had been marketed to the Islamic world as the champions of their religion. If the Taliban would have handed Osama bin Laden to the United States, a wave of suicide bombings would have wiped out the Taliban leadership, and years of Pakistani investment on the organization would have vanished.

The United States

When the United States entered the war in Afghanistan, it did not want a total collapse of the Taliban. It was hoping that, by bombing some military installations and buying local commanders as well as tribal elders, a coup within the Taliban would bring an end to the

group. America had only one objective, kill or arrest Osama bin Laden. Nation building and helping the people of Afghanistan was a secondary concern. Furthermore, the United States had invested in Afghanistan through the Taliban. For America, the Taliban was a cover to safeguard its interest in the region through its ally Pakistan. In the events that followed, Pashtun nationalists withdrew their support for the Taliban, switched sides and joined the current government of Hamid Karzai.

When the United States invaded Afghanistan, one policy never changed. After the Taliban government fell, the United States and its regional allies continued to sideline the Northern Alliance. Its leadership was introduced to the world as warlords. Battle hardened mujahidin fighters were disarmed, which resulted in a security vacuum in the country.

The young leadership of the Northern Alliance committed catastrophic mistakes. They trusted the United States and Hamid Karzai and abandoned their leader, Rabbani, agreeing to disarm their most loyal military forces.

When I was one of the few advisors to President Rabbani, we opposed the Bonn Agreement. While the Bonn negotiations were ongoing in 2002, President Rabbani came out of the palace and asked me to walk with him in the yard of the palace. He stated, "Ustad (teacher) the U.S. war planes are not landing till you agree to the draft resolution in Bonn." He feared that the U.S. diplomats swayed his negotiators.

While America turned its attention to dismantle the leadership and the fighting force of the Northern Alliance, the Taliban found respite. With the support of the I.S.I. they were able to regroup. Once again the regrouping of the Taliban became a blessing for the Northern Alliance, and U.S. attention was once again diverted to the Taliban.

What is astonishing is that throughout this war, Washington did not list the Taliban as a terrorist group! Hamid Karzai interpreted and used the reemergence of the Taliban as Pashtun dissatisfaction due to unfair division of power in the government. He argued that

more top government posts should be given to Pashtuns. This was achieved at the expense of the Tajiks. Initially the naïve "Young Guard" of Tajik leadership unwisely trusted Karzai.

After the collapse of the Taliban, there was a white coup inside the Jamiat-e Islami party. Marshal Fahim, Younis Qanuni, and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah were allured by the charm of western diplomats and were politely distancing themselves from Rabbani, their leader, Politically, Jamiat-e Islami is from the same ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood (al Ikhwan al Muslimun) that was founded in Egypt by Hassan al Banna. However, in Afghanistan it did not have the same disciplined education program as Egypt. Individuals and commanders rose to leadership without acquiring the proper party discipline. This resulted in the lack of loyalty to their party line.

While America turned its attention to foment division in and amongst the Northern Alliance, the Taliban found respite. The Taliban regrouped with the support of the I.S.I. Once again, the regrouping of the Taliban became a blessing for the Northern Alliance. U.S. attention was again diverted to the Taliban. Karzai capitalized on the resurgence of the Taliban. He reasoned that it was a sign of Pashtun dissatisfaction due to the unfair division of power. He campaigned for more top government posts to be given to Pashtuns. This was achieved at the expense of Tajiks.

Despite these grievances in the past ten years, the Northern Alliance never retaliated against Karzai for their losses. Yet, they continue to be delegitimized as warlords. On the other hand, President Karzai publicly refers to the Taliban as "my brothers" and hundreds of Taliban were freed from prisons. Evidence shows that many of these former prisoners have returned to the battlefield and some have committed suicide attacks.

President Karzai no longer blames the Taliban or the Pakistani government for the problems of Afghanistan. Instead, he says there are enemies of Afghanistan who are disrupting peace and development in the country. Since the killing of Osama bin Laden inside Pakistan, a chain of assassinations has almost dismantled the ranks of commanders of Jamiat-e Islami. The former president and the sitting head of the High Peace Council (H.P.C.), Rabbani,

were murdered in a suicide attack. Despite all this, President Karzai refuses to directly blame the Taliban. Since these murders, not a single person has been arrested or implicated in relation to these crimes. The government's indifference and silence is very insulting and not conducive for lasting peace.

Washington wants to deal with its former business partners, the Taliban, only if they openly distance themselves from al-Qaida. On the other hand, Pakistan is willing to work with the former Taliban allies, the Pashtun nationalists. They now hold key posts in the Afghan government forcing Tajiks from key government posts. It is not a coincidence that the United States discovered the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden. Undoubtedly, Pakistan played a role in the attack. But, did Pakistan reach a deal with Washington on the future makeup and direction of the Afghan government?

The evidence suggests that while the Taliban are being cleansed from al-Qaida, the Afghan government is purging itself from the top Northern Alliance leaders and commanders that once constituted the backbone of the resistance against the Pakistani backed Taliban. If this trend continues, a Washington-friendly, Pakistani-backed, Pashtun controlled Afghanistan will be born on top of the ashes of all the Northern Alliance mujahidin who fought for equality and justice for all ethnicities and tribes under the banner of Islam. If this occurs, Islam will be reduced to the length of men's beards and extended to length of women's chador!

The United States must seek a solution to the wider conflict of Afghanistan and avoid over-fixating on the Taliban. Making peace with a section of Taliban by appeasing Pakistan will not safeguard the legitimate interests of the United States in the region. Pakistan negotiated a deal with a large number of Taliban, but there will always be group willing to sacrifice their lives for the creation of a Caliphate under their leader Mullah Omar. The position of Mullah Omar is in itself an obstacle to peace. How could Mullah Omar convince his followers that he is going to step down as "Amir al-Moameneen" (leader of the faithful) in favor of a U.S.-backed president? What words would he use to defend such a policy when he meets the fathers and mothers of those who were encouraged to carry out suicide attacks on U.S. interests in Afghanistan? Perhaps

Mullah Omar will also be handed over to the United States or Afghan government for the right price. But, peace without Mullah Omar will not be acceptable by the Taliban. In this scenario, suicide bombings will continue. U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will not end attacks on American interests. The U.S. problem is larger than Afghanistan.

The Path to Peace

The key to U.S. problems lies in the illegal occupation of Palestine. As a super power, The United States will continue to face threats to its national security. But, the United States must address the Israeli-Palestinian issue. A free Palestine, on 1967 borders, would prove that the United States believes in the establishment of a lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. This would be the first time in the history of U.S.-Israeli relations that a few tears were finally placed on the faces of Israelis instead of Palestinians. Any Palestine that comes into existence through a compromise of 1967 borders will have America seated in the blame chair. For the Arab Islamic world, American sincerity is ultimately tested in Palestine, not just in Afghanistan.

Washington must be cautious not to substitute one enemy for another. The rights of Tajiks must be part of any peace equation in Afghanistan. For Tajiks, peace cannot exist without justice. We believe political agreement alone is not going to solve the problems of Afghanistan. Any political solution must be based on equality and free access. The constitution must safeguard the rights of all ethnicities and tribes based on the teachings of Islam, and international law should not contradict the sharia. Furthermore, fair access to government and the institutions of modern society must be guaranteed for all. Equality and access is best achieved through federalism.

Federalism is the only solution for Afghanistan's political and security demise. The country is on the path of destruction without it. In a federation, Mullah Omar could still be the spiritual leader of provinces where he, or the Taliban, resides. Federalism will popularize politics and compartmentalize the country and its problems. Under this arrangement, each province would be

responsible for its own internal development and security. In a central government any local dispute turns into a national crisis, whereas with federalism, the problem would be contained within the limits of a province. Compartmentalization will contain problems from affecting the entire country and will give the various tribes the freedom to govern themselves with the federal government providing only the necessities of maintaining the state and preserving the welfare of the people while providing security. The details of division of powers and responsibilities between provincial governments and the federal government would be based on a negotiated constitution. Federalism would also limit the outside interference in local issues due to the fact that provincial governments would be popularly elected and not appointed by the "puppet president" in Kabul.

Afghanistan is a nation of minorities with different languages. The topography of the country does not allow the central government full access to all sections to establish law and order. The central government's development plans for the provinces are often out of touch with the real needs of the people and big governments are often inefficient and corrupt. It is time to take the government to the people instead of dragging the people to the government. A federal system based on the existing division of provinces will reduce the tribal and ethnic tension while empowering the people, and will result in responsible government. Currently, a Pashtun led central government appoints governors based on political point scoring against its opponents.

Federalism will also improve security. In a federal system each province would have its provincial police force. If the Taliban or any other group decides to kill the police force of a province, the people would soon rise and demand an end to the killings. Currently, members of the police from other provinces are dying in the Taliban held territories and the local population does not feel the consequence of these killings. We believe that each province must be responsible for its internal security.

As a Tajik, I am not opposed to peace talks with the Taliban nor do I want to be my neighbors' enemy. I believe that we are isolated from the struggle for power in our country. Pashtuns are

supported by both Pakistan and America. Hazaras are supported by Iran. And Uzbeks find support from Turkey and Uzbekistan. Tajiks draw their strength from being realists and by making huge compromises. But, if a peace deal is reached with the Taliban, at our expense, new conflicts will arise.

Conclusion

To conclude, the way forward is to call for a goodwill agreement between the government of Hamid Karzai and the opposition, led by Dr. Abdullah, and other prominent presidential candidates, to create a government of national unity. The mandate of the government of national unity should be to:

1. Reform the constitution and embrace a parliamentary system where President Karzai would remain in his post while Dr. Abdullah would assume the post of prime minister in a federal system.
2. Provincial governors and district administrators should be popularly elected as part of a federal system.
3. Relinquish the security of each province to its own police force under the supervision of the federal police.
4. Compromise on the doctrine of a free market economy and embrace a mixed economy.
5. Lead and conduct peace negotiations with the Taliban.
6. Reintroduce conscription to the army, which will allow a true representation of all ethnicities in the army without a politically imposed quota.
7. Pave the way for free and fair elections after 3 years of the establishment of government of national unity

Finally, the Arab and Muslim world must step forward to help Afghanistan build a lasting peace that would ultimately strengthen regional stability and cooperation for a better world.

Chapter Six

Challenges in the Afghan Peace Process: Insights from the Irish Experience

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Prelude

1994 marked one of the most hopeless points in the Afghan conflict. Attempts at an agreed political transition after the collapse of the communist government had failed. The capital was riven by factional fighting and in the country at large a patchwork of warlords, petty commanders and ad hoc councils had filled the resulting power vacuum. The international community was busy elsewhere in the post-Cold War world. In Afghanistan the UN political mission had been scaled down and the main international role was limited to sparsely-funded humanitarianism.

During this period the humanitarian organization I worked for had helped fund the establishment of a technical training centre which later went on to become Bamyan University. We installed in the centre one of the first satellite televisions in that part of the country. Therefore, when, thousands of miles away, on 31 August 1994 the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced a ceasefire, I was able to gather Afghan colleagues round the TV. I struggled to explain the significance and potential relevance of the events we were witnessing– the establishment of common ground between the unarmed and armed opposition, the ceasefire itself and the novel quid pro quo of Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams finally being allowed to talk freely on air[1]. I had hoped at least to provoke discussion

1 Prior to the ceasefire British government regulations banned media organisations from broadcasting footage of Gerry Adams speaking with his own voice and so they had to use a voice over instead.

of the most basic idea, that if the protagonists in an intractable conflict like the Irish one could halt violence, then something must be possible in Afghanistan also. The example did not seem to impress any of my Afghan colleagues. They believed in Afghan exceptionalism – that Afghanistan and its conflict were different and no European experience could be relevant.

Almost two decades later Afghans grapple with some of the same challenges which were portrayed in the 1994 news coverage of the Irish ceasefire. The role of secret talks with conflict actors, the conditions under which combatants can be admitted to the political process, amnesties and prisoner releases, are all issues discussed in today's Afghanistan and 1990's Northern Ireland. There finally seems to be a stronger basis for drawing parallels between Irish experience of the 1990's and the current Afghan Peace process. This essay presents a comparative analysis of the Afghan and Irish peace processes but deliberately focuses on differences of approach. There are important similarities in the context of the conflicts and the configuration of their respective conflict actors. However, those responsible for pursuing peace in Afghanistan and Ireland have in key aspects responded differently to the challenges they faced. Informed by scholarship on the lessons learned from the Irish process, the essay considers why those involved in the Afghan peace process have done things differently and what they might be able to learn from the alternative Irish approaches. The comparative analysis considers four key challenges which have been potentially critical in both peace processes but which have been handled differently – the role of insurgent leadership in the peace process, the approach to ceasefires, the role of prisoners and the role of external mediation.

A narrative of the Afghan peace process

Popular discourse about Afghanistan generally takes for granted that there is a peace process under way there, with little precision about when it started or which of the various strands of political activity in the country are part of the process. This essay proceeds on the basis that the current Afghan peace process was initiated in January 2010 and continues to date.

The narrative of a peace process should be rooted in an

understanding of the conflict which the process is intended to address. It should include the historical background and root causes as well as the immediate context – the situation prevailing at the time of the launch of the peace process. The narrative should include an overview of the actors, an account of the actions they undertook to bring about peace, the terms of any peace agreement, an account of the implementation of the agreement and assessment of the outcome. By any sensible reckoning the Afghan peace process is still at an early stage. Although it is clear who the main actors are and they have all played their role in setting the stage for negotiations, as of the time of writing in July 2013, there had been no formal agreements and there was no final outcome to assess.

Historical background and root causes

The current Afghan conflict is multi-causal with multiple actors. It pits an insurgent force and a coalition of international *jihadis* against the Kabul government and its international allies. The majority of insurgents act under the authority of a political movement (the Afghan *Taliban*). They are predominantly ethnically Pashtun and claim to be struggling to establish a just Islamic order and to expel foreign occupation forces. The government is ostensibly based on a democratic dispensation and has participation from all ethnic groups. It claims to be fighting to defend the constitutional order against rebellion, international terrorism and regional interference. The US and allies claim both to be fighting international terrorism and supporting an ally. The root causes of this complex conflict include structural, ethnic, ideological and geopolitical dimensions. The post-2001 insurgency has been superimposed upon a conflict which was caused by the crisis in modernization in 1960's and 1970's Afghanistan and the politics of the final stages of the Cold War. In contrast to hopes that the collapse of the *Taliban* in 2001 might end conflict in Afghanistan, the post-2001 Afghan state structures have turned out to be unaccountable, abusive, corrupt, nepotist and ineffective. This has created multiple aggrieved groups, available to be mobilized by conflict actors. The *Taliban* Movement was best positioned to mobilize against the Afghan government because it had an effective organization, a loyal cadre and well-developed regional and international linkages. The main ethnic theme underpinning the

different rounds of conflict since the collapse of the communist state in 1992 has been the struggle to define a new social contract between the Pashtuns and the smaller ethnic groups. *Taliban* periodically portray themselves as defending the Pashtun interest and indeed prior to 2001 their main rivals were a coalition of mainly Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara commanders. However there has never been evidence of majority support for *Taliban* among Pashtuns and the Movement's religious agenda and authoritarian modus operandi have pitted *Taliban* against existing Pashtun tribal and political leadership. The ideological confrontation represents a struggle over how to express Afghan Muslim identity, with *Taliban* insurgents claiming to be best qualified to define an Islamic state in much the same way that the anti-Soviet *mujahideen* made this claim a generation before. The conflict retains its geopolitical significance because even twelve years after the fall of the *Taliban*, international *jihadi* networks remain entrenched in Pakistan and active in Afghanistan. The US, for now, remains determined to fight them and the outcome has many implications for the stability of Pakistan. Although these root causes can be specified in many ways, the most important point is that Afghanistan faces a complex conflict and therefore the peace process must address the multiple causes. No actor can realistically hope to achieve peace by concentrating on a single factor, such as the withdrawal of foreign troops.

Genesis of the current Afghan peace process

The current Afghan peace process can best be thought of as having begun in January 2010 around the time of the London Conference on Afghanistan. The conference itself was just one of a long line of largely theatrical international gatherings, where countries declared their intention to help the Afghan Government and its country. However the thinking of all the key actors about the conflict seems to have shifted around the time of the conference. The Afghan Government adopted a challenging policy paper acknowledging some of the structural causes of the conflict, accepting most *Taliban* as Afghan political actors and committing to a series of steps aimed at reconciliation with the *Taliban*[1]. The US Government committed

1 "Police for National Reconciliation and Reintegration of Armed Opposition Groups," National Security Council, Kabul, December 2009.

at the conference to support a limited process of "reintegration". This was just a scaling up of previous efforts to buy off disaffected opposition fighters and cannot really be thought of as part of the peace process. But the US Government went much further in a subsequent policy rethink and by March was able to signal that the US too was prepared to back reconciliation between the *Taliban* and the Afghan Government. The *Taliban* for their part also seem to have engaged in a process of reflection. The Movement used communiqués attributed to its supreme leader, Mullah Omar, to signal its political intent. Firstly it indicated to the US that in the event of US troop withdrawal it would be prepared to formalise a break with Al Qaeda[1]. Latterly it indicated that it had a vision of a peaceful and plural Afghanistan, something which would inevitably involve some form of reconciliation with other Afghan groups. All three main conflict actors thus seemed by 2010 to be moving towards realization that they would not achieve their objectives by force alone. However the re-thinking in Afghanistan was more subtle than a simple reaction to a stalemated conflict. All three had cause to wonder whether they were even fighting the right enemy. The US had declared a commitment to fight international terrorism but over time found itself applying most military resources to fighting Afghan *Taliban*, who consistently down-played any links to international terrorists. The US acceptance of the idea of reconciliation in Afghanistan occurred at the same time President Obama committed to a military surge. Meanwhile numerous public statements and private remarks show clearly that President Karzai was unhappy at presiding over a war waged largely in Pashtun provinces and villages. He even publicly speculated that he might have more in common with the Taliban than with NATO. Insofar as the *Taliban* leadership went through a rethink after 2010 they seem to have considered under what circumstance they would eventually deal politically with other Afghans and how opening up a political front might also help them in their post-2001 quest to achieve some form of international legitimacy.

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1 "U.S. Silent About Taliban Guarantee Offer on al Qaeda," Gareth Porter, IPS, Washington, Dec 15 2009.

Peace Process Actions

Following the path set out in the original NSC policy paper, the Afghan Government convened what it described as a "peace *jirga*". Provincial governors selected delegates from around the country to meet in Kabul and agree a strategy for pursuing reconciliation. The *jirga* succeeded in adopting a resolution which gave the government a mandate to pursue its overtures to the *Taliban*. Critics of the peace *jirga* complained that it was stage-managed to endorse a formula which the government had already prepared. This was indeed the government's intention. The challenge of obtaining the mandate for dealing with the enemy is a familiar one for conflict protagonists and this kind of stage-managed ad hoc meeting has been the Kabul government's preferred modus operandi for a decade.

The Government's next set-piece action was to establish the High Peace Council. This was to be an essential part of the architecture in the government's vision of the peace process. It consisted of veterans of the different stages of the conflict who had chosen to align themselves with the Kabul government, plus a small contingent of women. The President nominated former president Burhanuddin Rabbani as chair. On the positive side, being a national figure with his own political base, Rabbani gave the Commission some gravitas. However, more controversially, Rabbani had been the figurehead of the armed resistance to the *Taliban* and so his leadership of the Commission provided the *Taliban* with the obvious pretext to question the Commission's credentials for any kind of mediator role.

In the wake of the establishment of the High Peace Council, the President's national security team and the HPC made several attempts to establish contacts with the *Taliban*. None of these resulted in a bona fide negotiation track. The most notorious of these were what came to be known as the "fake Mansoor" track, when an impostor passed himself off to NATO and the Afghan Government as the deputy of Mullah Omar. The most notorious was the next impostor who killed former President Rabbani and injured the head of the HPC secretariat in a suicide attack. The *Taliban* leadership held back from engaging with the HPC and the government and HPC efforts to circumvent this leadership position failed.

The Qatar track was significant because it produced the first sustained, acknowledged engagement between the *Taliban* leadership and the other conflict actors. Preliminary dialogue facilitated by a German envoy in 2011 resulted in an agreement between the *Taliban* and the US to meet face to face in Qatar. In the light of many hoaxes and false starts, this was an important development. The original *Taliban* envoy was a known figure, who enjoyed the confidence of the *Taliban* supreme leader and headed the movement's Political Commission. He was able to establish that the Qatar track was the sole official track through which the leadership was prepared to engage politically. The *Taliban* publicly acknowledged that they were involved in talks and the leadership authorized a team of other political commission members to relocate to Qatar as guests of the Emirate. The presence of this team through 2012, able to meet with diplomats, meant that after a decade of exclusive focus on armed struggle, the *Taliban* acquired the ability to act politically.

In a move analogous to what the Afghan government had done with its 2010 Peace *Jirga*, during January-February of 2012 the *Taliban's* Instructional Commission ran seminars in Pakistan for commanders and activists, to brief them on the Qatar track and demand that they obey their leaders and support the initiative.

The main focus of the *Taliban* Qatar team in early 2012 was on negotiating with the US over what were dubbed confidence building measures. The *Taliban* sought release of prisoners from US detention and sought relaxations in the UN sanctions regime, which they argued labelled them as terrorists and hindered movement which was necessary to peace-making. The US and *Taliban* delegations developed the outline of a deal which would see five *Taliban* prisoners transferred from Guantanamo to Qatar. In the event this deal was not finalized in 2012 and by March the Taliban announced the suspension of direct contacts with the US, ostensibly objecting to shifting US positions. During the period of suspension of direct contacts with the United States after March 2012, the *Taliban* delegation in Qatar provided a platform for the movement to interact with a range of diplomats and participate in select officially-sponsored civil society fora, even meeting with HPC members.

In June 2013 sustained diplomatic pressure and the timely application of Pakistani influence resulted in a *Taliban* declaration that the movement was ready for dialogue and would not allow Afghan soil to be used for external aggression. This declaration opened the way for the *Taliban* delegation to be upgraded into a political office. The office opening was supposed to be followed by talks between the *Taliban* and the US and then the High Peace Council. However the process soon stalled over a dispute over whether the *Taliban* were styling themselves as a government-in-waiting. The controversy delayed the opening of the anticipated talks. Significantly, unlike what had happened in 2012, the Pakistan-based *Taliban* leadership did nothing to prepare the movement for the declaration and opening of a political office. The leadership seemed to have less invested in the process than a year earlier.

Another of the actions which the international community took during 2012 in support of the peace process was an overhaul of the regime of sanctions on *Taliban* and *Al Qaida*. Formally the Security Council separated the list of *Taliban* subject to sanctions from the list of *Al Qaida* associates also under sanctions. The sanctions committee also processed a number of requests for de-listing where the Afghan Government reported that individuals were no longer active with the movement and provided temporary authorization for travel where this was necessary for peace related activities. The practical significance of sanctions adjustments for *Taliban* may have been limited, but in terms of confidence building, the *Taliban* were able to see that even the Security Council aligned itself with this tentative peace process.

A series of Track two type events have taken place parallel to the official tracks. In these, *Taliban*, some speaking officially on behalf of the movement, others speaking in a personal capacity, have interacted with members of the unarmed opposition, civil society and HPC. Although none of these events specifically related to a negotiating process, they have provided an opportunity for these differing Afghan constituencies to explore the possibility of compromise. For the *Taliban* also it has been an opportunity to be exposed to Afghans with radically differing political positions and to articulate their political positions and ideas on the way forward.

Pakistan had long had an official stance of favouring reconciliation and the peaceful incorporation of the Taliban into the Afghan political system. However it was not involved in the rethink that other actors undertook in the preliminary stages of the peace process. Instead the Pakistan army leadership announced that they conducted their own version of the strategic rethink in the second half of 2012. They announced that they had concluded that terrorism within Pakistan constituted the gravest national security threat. Therefore, according to this rethink, they renewed their commitment to achieve stability in Afghanistan and thus favourable conditions for reining in terrorism in Pakistan. Alongside their declaration of this rethink, the government of Pakistan hosted an HPC delegation, released several batches of *Taliban* prisoners as requested by President Karzai and participated in the February 2013 Chequers trilateral summit along with President Karzai. The main outcome of this summit was a remarkable declaration by the three leaders that they wanted the preliminary Taliban delegation in Qatar to start work officially and that they would try to accelerate the peace process towards an agreement within six months.

Three years of concerted efforts by the Government of Afghanistan, the United States, Qatar and other allies, driven by the initial strategic idea that military force alone would not suffice, together constitute a peace process. Because actions to date are only the early stages of a peace process, its final shape is not known. The most accessible statement of the Government of Afghanistan's vision for the rest of this process is the "Peace Roadmap", prepared by the HPC and also handed over to their counterparts in Pakistan[1]. The Roadmap anticipates that draw-down of international troops will encourage a spontaneous de-escalation of violence. It then anticipates that the Taliban will agree to talk with the HPC and that eventually the Taliban Movement will agree to go on ceasefire and for its members to accept positions in the Afghan administrative apparatus. Rather than a comprehensive peace agreement, in this vision there would be an incremental accommodation between the Taliban and the Afghan government, allowing for the Taliban Movement to end its armed struggle and embrace constitutional politics. There are many other possible outcomes to the conflict and

1 "Peace Process Road Map to 2015," High peace Council, Kabul, November 2012.

peace process. However, violence in the first half of 2013 increased relative to the previous year. There was a rise in insurgent initiated attacks and a 25% increase in civilian casualties in the opening months of the fighting season. This indicated that the initiation of the peace process had not been accompanied by any change in the Taliban's military campaign[1].

Comparative analysis of key elements of the Irish and Afghan peace processes

Despite the traditional Afghan insistence on the uniqueness of their conflict, there are sufficient parallels between the two conflicts to draw some insights from the experience of the Irish peace process and also to highlight key differences or gaps in the Afghan case. The essay focuses on four issues which are relevant to both peace processes, which proved critical to success in the Irish case and which have been handled differently in the Afghan case.

Leadership and the peace process

One of the much studied aspects of the Irish experience concerned the role of militant leadership in the run up to and during the peace process[2]. The IRA and its political wing *Sinn Fein* engaged in a sustained and strategic process to rethink the armed struggle and reshape republican politics[3]. Leaders who had credibility among the militants challenged them to enter electoral politics, from which their movement had traditionally abstained and to question the utility of armed struggle. The process of the militants' strategic rethink was also closely linked to confidential dialogue. The confidential dialogue tracks allowed militant republicans to explore possible political futures and appraise the viability of a peace process. One of the important dialogue channels before the 1994 ceasefire was the talks between republican Gerry Adams and John Hume, former civil rights activist and then head of the main constitutional

1 "The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security," Report of the UN Secretary-General, UN, New York, June 2013.

2 A vast literature exists on the Northern Irish peace process and many primary sources are now easily accessible. The Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) has a large holding at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdbs/bibliography/index.html

3 For an overview of the roles of political leadership in the peace process "Abdicated and Assumed Responsibilities? the Multiple Roles of Political Leadership During the Northern Ireland Peace Process," Cathy Gormley-Heenan, Civil Wars, Autumn 2005.

nationalist party. Hume is credited with helping Adams develop a vision of democratic republican politics which was essential to the IRA decision to go on ceasefire.

There are many similarities in the challenge faced by the *Taliban* Movement if it is indeed to embrace a peace process. The movement has resorted to armed struggle to pursue its objectives since its inception in 1994. During the current stage of the conflict, movement propagandists have glorified violence against the regime and NATO as jihad. The vision for the *Taliban's* future outlined in the government's peace road map is eerily similar to Ireland's *Sinn Fein* – a democratic party working within the constitution. But whereas the Irish republican leadership, in the key stages of the peace process, was fully engaged in internal and external dialogue, the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Omar, is inaccessible and essentially uninvolved. His deputy, in Omar's absence, had responsibility for running the movement and its armed campaign. In terms of preparing the base for a shift into politics, he failed to build upon the Mullah Omar Eid missives and the 2012 briefing seminars. The failure of the Taliban leadership to do the groundwork in the year before their June 2013 Doha declaration stands in stark contrast to the efforts expended by the Irish republican leaders during the equivalent period. Furthermore, the original Taliban had a cliquish reputation, trusting as peers only those who shared their education background in the *madrassahs*. This cliquish element of the Movement means that they are unlikely to be swayed by the ideas or instructions of figures lacking their *madrassah* background. The Irish experience suggests that a *Taliban* internal process to recalibrate the movement's political philosophy will precede any serious strategic move towards peace. In terms of how such a move might be encouraged, the question is not just which *Taliban* leader might play the Gerry Adams role, but which non-*Talib* might play the John Hume role – which sympathetic Afghan political figure might help the leadership develop a vision of peaceful *Taliban* politics.

Prisoners in the two peace processes

Both conflicts have produced large numbers of prisoners in the hands of the state parties and detainee issues have featured

prominently in the two peace processes. However there has also been a stark contrast in the approach taken by the Northern Irish actors and the Afghan actors. From an early stage in the Northern Irish conflict republicans articulated grievances relating to the treatment of their prisoners, starting with the reaction to internment without trial[1]. Later they successfully introduced the struggle into the jails so prisoners became actors in their own right, most visibly during the period of the blanket protests, the hunger-strikes and Bobby Sands' election to parliament. But even in the period when prisoner issues dominated the agenda publicly aired by the republican movement, their demands were for political status for the prisoners, not release or pardon. The republican goal of capturing the state notwithstanding, both sides worked on the understanding that in a conflict combatants can expect to be detained if caught. Republicans maintained a tradition of refusing to recognize the British courts through which they were tried. They criticized the British government for criminalization of paramilitary prisoners. However until the final settlement negotiations they never forced prisoner releases onto the agenda.

In keeping with this prisoners and ex-prisoners played a role in the Northern Irish peace process not as bargaining counters but as actors. Some of the paramilitaries used their period in detention to engage in political education and develop ideas and new relationships, including across sectarian lines. The archetypal example is Gusty Spence, a commander of one of the paramilitary forces, the UVF, who while in detention rejected sectarianism and founded a political party. He later went on to play a key role in orchestrating the loyalist ceasefire and was chosen to make the official ceasefire announcement in 1994. During the period of multi-party talks, British government and republicans alike recognized the prisoners as an important constituency. They concluded that prisoner support for an upcoming deal would make it easier for both the republican and loyalist movements to endorse it. Therefore the British authorities in Northern Ireland facilitated access for negotiators to the jails. At one stage the senior-most British political

1 "Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland: Resistance, Management, and Release", Kieran McEvoy, 2001.

figure in the province, the Secretary of State, herself visited the main prison to consult with prisoners. All the while the detention regime continued as routine, detaining and releasing according to individual cases and the criminal justice system, until the political deal was done. This deal included a programme of "early releases", whereby paramilitary prisoners, covered by terms stipulated in the agreement, were let out on good conduct guarantees. Prior to this final settlement, neither did the British government offer any major concessions on prisoner releases, nor did republicans agitate for them. There seems to have been a general understanding that the prisoners' issue was a final settlement issue, not an intermediate one.

The approach to prisoners in the Afghan peace process has differed radically. Rather than prisoner release being treated as an end-state issue, Taliban have pursued it as a short term goal and both the Afghan Government and its High Peace Council have seemed amenable to this. The management of Afghan prisoners has been subject to the logic of political patronage as actors on the government side have tried to boost their influence through selective releases.

Prior to the current peace-process, the Afghan government's 2005 Strengthening Peace initiative included some prisoner-related activities. Prisoners released from Guantanamo or Bagram participated in reconciliation sessions hosted by the programme's head, Sebghatullah Mojadedi and were encouraged to stay away from the fighting and benefit from the letters of protection which the programme dispensed. However there was no systematic link between the wooing of individual former prisoners and any attempt to engage with their movement as a whole.

For their part, the Taliban leadership has repeatedly sought the release of prisoners in their engagements with Afghan government envoys and subsequently with the US. This focus on prisoners is consistent with the movement's priorities away from peace talks. The Movement runs a Commission concerned with detainee affairs, the prime purpose of which is to facilitate the speedy release of detainees. It does this through paying substantial bribes to relevant

parts of the criminal justice system or by facilitating lobbying on behalf of the detainees, so as to get them included in the periodic presidential pardons and early release programmes which have become a feature of Afghan detentions.

It has been widely reported that the *Taliban's* original key focus in the US – *Taliban* Qatar talks was the tentative deal for the transfer of five senior *Taliban* detainees from Guantanamo to Qatar. Enthusiasts for the Qatar process have rationalized this as a confidence building measure, structured to open the way for *Taliban* to address other important issues such as links with *Al Qaida* and to move onto deeper political engagement. However, in the absence of a well articulated *Taliban* political agenda, critics of the process have asked whether the prisoner release, rather than progress towards a settlement, might even be the *Taliban's* primary objective for their engagement in Qatar.

In addition to the informal and unacknowledged back-door releases of *Taliban* prisoners, the Afghan government has taken pains in public to demonstrate itself open to accommodating *Taliban* demands for prisoner release, even in the absence of serious political engagement or a viable peace process. Thus, under the President's instructions, the High Peace Council advocated that Pakistan release *Taliban* former deputy, Mullah Baradar, and other detainees. Obligingly, in late 2012 the Pakistan authorities launched a prisoner release programme under which senior and mid-level *Taliban* (excluding Mullah Baradar), who had been in ISI detention for as long as five years, were released unconditionally and without any link to a formal peace process. In the absence of any condition or follow up mechanisms for the Taliban prisoners released in Pakistan there seems to be no real basis for the expectation expressed by some commentators that they would lobby among their peers for peace. Parallel to this the Government of Afghanistan has publicised its own effort to release detainees from Bagram unconditionally, as it takes over responsibility for detainees previously under the control of the US military. The HPC operates a prisoners committee which has previously interacted with prisoners in their places of detention. Potentially such a body could draw detainees into the political dialogue. However until now, in contrast to what happened

in Northern Ireland, there has been no serious effort to develop the Taliban detainees as a constituency and stakeholder in the peace process. For example, if the Irish model had been followed, at times when the Taliban leadership was faced with taking strategic decisions related to the peace process, either its envoys or mediators would seek access to prisoners in the main prisons to canvass them.

The apparent openness of all involved state parties to accommodating Taliban demands for prisoner releases means that Taliban have simply not received a clear message that general prisoner releases could only be part of a final settlement. This in itself has weakened the potential for bona fide combatants, while in detention, to develop as a pro-peace constituency.

Ceasefires in the peace processes

The 1994 Northern Irish ceasefire consisted of an announcement by the republican movement that its militants would unconditionally suspend armed attacks, in anticipation of the initiation of a political process to resolve the conflict[1]. This was an orchestrated unilateral move. The republican movement made the decision to go on ceasefire without any formal agreement with the other conflict parties. But the discrete talks which republicans had been involved in prior to the announcement had provided the republican leadership assurances of sufficient reciprocal moves to warrant making the announcement. In the event, the British government reciprocated immediately by withdrawing some of the sanctions against the republican political leadership. Two months later the other main paramilitaries, who had themselves been involved in violence against the republicans, also went on ceasefire, and the republicans were admitted to the broad-based talks, in keeping with the understanding prior to the announcement of the ceasefire. The republican ceasefire held for most of the period from the 1994 announcement (with a temporary return to violence in 1996 and 1997).

The 1994 republican ceasefire can be considered the end of the beginning of the Irish peace process. This is expressed simply in

1 For survey evidence on which initiatives advanced the peace process, see "How Did Northern Ireland Move Toward Peace?" CDA Reflecting on Peace Practice project, Cambridge, Niall Fitzduff and Sue Williams, Cambridge MA, June 2007.

terms of the time-line. The discrete talks which made the ceasefire possible took place between 1990 and 1994. In the wake of the ceasefire announcement multi-party talks process continued from 1996 to 1998, at which point the Northern Irish parties signed the main peace instrument, the Good Friday Agreement. Thereafter implementation of the arrangements included in the Good Friday Agreement and finalizing the multiple supplementary agreements which were required took a further ten years.

There was a strong rationale for this end-of-beginning timing. The process was incremental. Only a small number of actors were directly involved in the efforts leading to the ceasefire. Both the British and Irish governments ran confidential talks tracks with the republican leadership, which served to reassure republicans of state support for a post-ceasefire political process. The main Northern Irish constitutional nationalist politician, John Hume, undertook a confidential dialogue with the republican leadership to evolve a vision of non-violent republican politics. His links with anti-republican politicians enabled him to offer assurances of the broader acceptance of the republican move to end violence. The several discrete dialogue channels were required to orchestrate short term gains for the republicans and thus *incentivize* the process. However a broader talks process, including republicans, would simply not have been possible before the ceasefire because of the level of resistance to including violent actors in the democratic process. Notwithstanding the efforts expended by those involved in the dialogue channels, the process leading up to the ceasefire was simple in design – a small number of actors, working bilaterally, addressing a limited agenda and pursuing informal and essentially non-binding agreements. The subsequent process of pursuit of political agreement was far more complex, because of the number of actors involved (all Northern Ireland political parties, the governments and civil society) and the ambitious agenda. But in 1994 the multi-party talks which eventually produced the peace agreement would have been impossible because of the absence of confidence between the actors and the lack of a consensus on admitting all parties to talks. The ceasefire helped generate this confidence and make the subsequent progress towards the peace agreement possible. This was the way in which the ceasefire was part of an incremental peace.

Whereas in approaching the ceasefire, republicans sought political reassurances for their movement, the move generated immediate and demonstrable benefits for the population because of the reduction in violence and the progress towards normalization of life which this allowed. The ceasefire became a significant moment which demonstrated to the people of Northern Ireland that there actually was a peace process under way. The element of popular confidence was important in generating momentum towards the 1998 peace agreement and ultimately ensuring that the agreement received a mandate. Popular support or elite participation were by no means foregone conclusions as leading unionist politicians continued to oppose the whole notion of admitting republicans into the political fold until a late stage of the process.

The ceasefire process was closely linked to the debate over violence and democratic politics. By the time of the ceasefire, republicans had decided to make a strategic shift into democratic politics. But it had also become clear to them that continued IRA violence was an obstacle to their political ambitions. The state actors and the other Northern Irish political parties had strong notions on the nature of democratic legitimacy and no movement with an active paramilitary wing could hope to gain acceptance as a political actor. The ceasefire became the republican passport to democratic politics, and a share in shaping the eventual peace agreement.

Several factors made the 1994 ceasefire viable and ensured that, despite a series of challenges, it prepared the way for the multi-party talks. In the first place, most of the paramilitary violence was conducted by a single actor, the IRA, which had a robust enough command chain to ensure its fighters observed the ceasefire. In the second place the main state actor, the British government, was supportive of the process and prepared to offer immediate accommodations to the republicans for halting violence. Thirdly most of the other local political actors were ready to participate in the peace talks and to accommodate republican participation, while those who objected (the DUP) excluded themselves from the process. Fourthly, the opposing paramilitaries, the loyalists, who had been involved in violence against republicans, reciprocated by

announcing a ceasefire of their own. Finally the active role of the international mediator, Senator Mitchell, helped protect the basic deal, of political participation in return for the end to violence.

The most obvious contrast with the Afghan case is that, with the exception of brief humanitarian pauses, no side in the Afghan conflict has entered a ceasefire since the onset of insurgency in 2003. Furthermore, there has been little public discussion of ceasefire. Despite the intense debate around the prospects for a peace process, the idea of a ceasefire has barely entered the agenda. The most notable exception to this is the Peace Roadmap, which does envisage a ceasefire. The talks which have taken place so far have involved no preconditions on the participants' armed activities. Although Taliban claim to have discussed the notion of limited ceasefire in their early engagement with the US, their primary focus was on the release of prisoners as a confidence building measure. The strategy pursued by all sides so far has been dubbed "talk and fight", with no clear short term pathway towards a cessation of violence. Whereas the preliminary talks in Ireland clearly came round to focusing on how to create the conditions for a ceasefire before proceeding to the broader political agenda, the actors in Afghanistan seem to expect to be able to maintain their military campaigns until either victory or a final settlement.

There are several reasons why the conflict actors in Afghanistan have been uninterested in pursuing a ceasefire. NATO has been suspicious of any suggestion of a ceasefire because of the fear that this could amount to a "ride out" strategy – an attempt by insurgents to preserve their forces while waiting for the NATO mission to run out of time. Insurgents meanwhile have two principal concerns. Firstly the *Taliban*'s current claim to legitimacy is based on their claim to be organizing righteous resistance to foreign forces and their assumed leverage is based primarily on the military strength they have demonstrated in recent years. Any leadership advocating a ceasefire with NATO forces still present, would risk losing that legitimacy and the ability to mobilize fighters in case the ceasefire failed, which in turn would result in them losing leverage relative to other Afghan actors. Furthermore, if the Taliban leadership were to go ahead with a ceasefire it would risk giving an opportunity to

radical or *salafist* elements in the movement to exit the command structure and carry on the fight regardless. They worry that the cohesiveness they maintained in fighting might not extend into a ceasefire. Although there are ample grounds for an observer to argue that no Afghan conflict actor has a realistic prospect of success through military means, none of them has definitely reached that conclusion, unlike the case in 1990's Northern Ireland. But one of the most striking contrasts between the two processes is the lack of a clear discourse on democratic credentials or participation in violence as a barrier to participation in the political process. The reasons for this are complex. In part the Afghan government has promoted ambivalence by being most forthright in condemning violence by ISAF forces, which are ostensibly fighting on its side. By adopting some of the insurgent narrative of vilifying foreign forces the government has failed to deliver a clear message that Taliban violence precludes them from a say in political affairs. The result is that the Afghan government and indeed other non-violent political actors have failed to articulate clear demands for Taliban to go on ceasefire if they expect to be admitted to a political process.

The role of external mediation

One of the standard learning points from the Northern Irish peace process was that an external mediator who enjoys the trust of all sides can help achieve progress when there is a lack of trust between the parties. Although the United States had no direct involvement in Northern Ireland, President Clinton's envoy, Senator George Mitchell emerged as one of the critical figures in the peace process[1].

The British and Irish governments requested President Clinton in 1995 to assign Senator Mitchell to help in the delicate follow up to the IRA ceasefire. The invitation marked a break with the traditional British reluctance to allow external involvement in Northern Ireland affairs. Mitchell became a joint chairman of the commission formed to address the issue of decommissioning paramilitary weapons. The issue had become highly divisive and was blocking progress on political talks. In this role the Senator

1 "Two Paths to Peace: Contrasting George Mitchell in Northern Ireland with Richard Holbrooke in Bosnia–Herzegovina," Daniel Curran, James K. Sebenius, and Michael Watkins, *Negotiation Journal*, October 2004.

developed his "Mitchell Principles" on the approach to democratic politics and refraining from violence. The parties eventually endorsed them as the criteria for admission to political talks. After Senator Mitchell's success in building a rapport with the Northern Ireland parties the governments invited him to stay on to chair the all party political talks, starting in 1996. In a marathon effort he steered these talks to a successful conclusion with the adoption of the Good Friday Agreement, a comprehensive peace settlement, in April 1998

Senator Mitchell's painstaking mediation proved effective in keeping the eight Northern Irish parties and the two governments engaged. Through deft handling of the decommissioning issue, he forestalled hard-line Unionist efforts to block republican participation in the political talks. He helped evolve the consensus-oriented decision-making rules which would be incorporated into the permanent political institutions. He built the working relationships and maintained the pressure which ensured that the multi-party talks did deliver an agreement on schedule.

The situation required external mediation because of the high degree of mistrust among the parties. The Northern Ireland party leaders were barely on speaking terms and neither of the governments enjoyed the trust of all parties. As an American envoy in the Irish and British context, Senator Mitchell was able to capitalize on the desire of all political party leaders to maintain their relationship with the United States and he brought a set of skills from his prior political experience.

With regards to external mediation also, the Afghan peace process has followed a contrasting path. The Afghan Government and United States have both resisted pursuing options for the deployment of an external mediator. The Afghan Government has expressed its hostility to any other parties "meddling" in peace efforts and has sought to control any process directly. For this purpose it has put forward the High Peace Council but has also ensured that this nominally independent commission actually works under close supervision of the government. The government has defended its resistance to external mediation on sovereignty

grounds – implying that external mediation would amount to partial surrender of sovereignty. The Afghan government successfully propagated as an unquestionable mantra the notion that any process must be "Afghan-led", regardless of other country experience of the utility of mediation. But the underlying rationale for this resistance seems to be a fear that a mediator might pursue a political settlement unfavourable to the government. Consistent with this, the government has shown some openness to the possibility of mediation by figures who enjoy the president's confidence. US resistance to external mediation involves some of the same concerns. Officially the US supports Afghan efforts towards reconciliation and thus inherits the Afghan sovereignty concerns. In reality it seems that the US has been reluctant to put itself in a position of being the principal provider of financial and military support and yet somehow subject to the influence of an external mediator. Therefore the US has assumed that it can play much of the role which might otherwise be played by an external mediator.

Among the other parties, Pakistan also has repeatedly articulated its support for an Afghan-led process, which implicitly rules out a role for external mediation. Only the Taliban have hinted at being receptive to an external mediator. In this regard the Taliban response to the role of the High Peace Council was significant. They criticized the government's selection of what they regarded as a partisan figure as chair, but affirmed that there is a role for a mediator who is not partisan, because there is a long tradition of involvement of such "*salis*" mediators in Afghan deal-making.

Because of the resistance of the majority of the parties to a role for an external mediator, the Qatar talks were structured without one. Non-US and Qatari diplomatic engagement, such as by the Norwegian Foreign Office, has had to be so discrete as to be almost invisible and highly constrained. The process expects the Taliban to deal directly with the other conflicting parties, the US and the Afghan government or its High Peace Council. The glaring lack of confidence between the parties which ensured that the opening of the Taliban political office caused so much acrimony provided another example of the pitfalls of pursuing peace without mediation.

Conclusion and implications for Qatar's involvement in the Afghan peace process

A comprehensive evaluation of the Northern Irish peace process in 2012, more than two decades after the British and Irish governments launched secret talks to help trigger a ceasefire, concluded that the process had indeed delivered peace. New political institutions were robust, levels of violence were greatly reduced, disarmament had been achieved and state security institutions had been reformed. However the evaluation established that Northern Ireland remained a divided society, most graphically illustrated by the doubling in the number of separation barriers, or peace walls, dividing communities, relative to the number which existed at the time of the 1998 peace agreement. The overall conclusion was that an ambitious peace process had successfully transformed an intractable conflict and provided a basis for managing coexistence without the destructive violence of the previous three decades[1].

In terms of the structure of the conflict there are enough parallels between the Afghan and Irish cases to warrant careful comparative analysis. Afghanistan, like Ireland, faces a protracted complex conflict with multiple actors. Superficially at least the Afghan peace process during the period 2010-2012 paralleled the pre-ceasefire 1990-1994 period in Ireland. In both cases there was no decisive winner, the actors reappraised their strategies in the light of the lack of military progress and in behind-the-scenes talks officials and insurgents tried to establish the basis for a fuller political engagement.

Despite the structural similarities in the conflicts, the comparative analysis showed significant difference in the way actors approached challenges in their respective peace processes. As Afghanistan is at a relatively early stage of its latest peace process, actors have an opportunity to draw on experience from cases such as the Northern Irish peace process in responding to blockages in their own peace process.

The parlous state of insurgent leadership provides an important part of the explanation for slow progress in the Afghan peace process.

1 "The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report," Paul Nolan, Community Relations Council, Belfast, February2012.

An effective republican leadership committed to transforming the role of the movement was one of the key factors permitting progress in the early stages of the Irish peace process. In contrast, while the Afghan peace process was stalled during 2012, there was no convincing evidence that the Taliban's supreme leader was even involved in decision-making. The fall-back leadership within the Movement proved itself during 2012 and 2013 unwilling or unable to make the strategic decision to move to the next stage of the peace process by entering negotiations. The lack of a dynamic insurgent leadership is likely to be an enduring feature of the Afghan process.

The treatment of prisoners has been radically different in both contexts. The British authorities in Northern Ireland offered no major compromises on prisoners in the early stage of the peace process but, in the later stages and after the ceasefire allowed the prisoners to be treated as a constituency with a stake in the eventual settlement, which included an early release programme. The Afghan authorities have pursued a somewhat chaotic accommodating approach on prisoners. This has given all detained militants reason to expect to be released even without any political deal or end to the conflict. Meanwhile, Afghan Government and Taliban alike seem to have shown little enthusiasm for the innovative idea of locating senior Taliban detainees from Guantanamo in Qatar as a sort of half-way house. How prisoners feature in the remainder of the Afghan peace process depends on whether the authorities holding them take a clear decision to treat early releases as an issue for a final settlement.

This paper has argued that the 1994 IRA ceasefire was a key moment in the Northern Irish peace process which opened the way for subsequent developments. In contrast none of the major actors in the Afghan process has seriously pursued a ceasefire. The failure of the architects of the Afghan peace process to focus clearly on a ceasefire as an interim goal has reduced the process's appeal to Afghans (no immediate prospect of improving the situation), made it more difficult to go forward (because a broad-based political agreement is difficult to reach without the confidence born of a successful ceasefire) and deferred the necessary debate on the illegitimacy of political violence.

Finally, external mediation played an important positive role in securing agreement in Northern Ireland, while the main state actors have opposed this tool in the Afghan process. The lack of confidence between the parties remains an issue in Afghanistan, although it was to address precisely this issue that the architects of the Northern Irish process accepted mediation.

The fact that the Afghan peace process does not seem to have benefited from any of these four important positive aspects of the Northern Irish experience suggests that there is ample scope for future innovation in the Afghan process. Given that, after a promising start, the process stalled, such innovation is likely to be necessary.

The Emirate of Qatar has been one of the most forward-looking supporters of the Afghan peace process, through its hosting of a Taliban delegation in the hope that this would lead to dialogue and ultimately formal negotiations. The four examples of experiences from a comparable peace process suggest a range of options for friends of the peace process, such as Qatar to help overcome the blockages. No actor can directly remedy the lack of a dynamic insurgent leadership. But Qatar can look for ways to help the Taliban Movement cope with its leadership shortfall, perhaps by assisting them in their strategic rethink. As long as it continues in its host and intermediary role, even for unofficial talks, Qatar also has an opportunity to help put the ceasefire firmly on the agenda. By being prepared to host senior figures released from Guantanamo, Qatar has already volunteered to innovate with regard to the role of prisoners in the Afghanistan peace process. Hosting such figures would give the Emirate of Qatar an opportunity to work with them on some of the strategic reflection about the future of the Movement and the rethinking of armed struggle. The Irish republican leadership undertook theirs in the run up to 1994 but evidently the Quetta-based Taliban leadership has not completed theirs. Finally, if the Emirate of Qatar is prepared to expand its role into acting as a facilitator assisting the parties inching towards peace, it can help compensate for the lack of a formal international mediator in the Afghan peace process.

Chapter Seven

Current Obstacles for Negotiations between the Taliban and the United States

Waheed Mozhdah

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1992. Before this adventure, Georgiy Arbatov, an advisor for President Mikhail Gorbachev, told high-ranking U.S. officials that following its demise, "We are going to do something terrible to America, you will no longer have an enemy." It was a premonition of the new threats to face the United States. The United States, in the absence of a powerful enemy to fight in a conventional war, faces a new enemy: Muslim extremists.

We should study the U.S. conflict against Islamism in three phases:

First phase: immediately after the Cold War (1990 – 2001)

Second phase: (2001 – 2011)

Third phase: beginning 2011

In the first phase, moderate Islamic groups were not allowed to acquire power through democratic elections. The Islamic groups like the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and Hamas in Palestine were not allowed to participate in elections. And the moderate Islamic groups (Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt) were also not allowed to participate in elections. So with this condition, the moderate Islamic groups were marginalized and the fundamentalists were empowered by a frustrated and disgruntled populace. Thus, what the United States is labeling "terrorism" are public protests or uprisings, which they forbid and cannot be practiced through legal and peaceful manners.

In the second phase, the program started from 11 September 2001-2011. In this period, the United States increased their efforts to remove the fundamentalist Islamic groups whom they called "terrorists". The United States dedicated more than one trillion dollars in their campaign to kill Osama bin Laden. This amount of money surpassed the spending for any military campaign in history. But the conclusion of an entire decade of fighting against terrorism shows the resiliency of the ideological groups. Any success in removing al Qaeda or Taliban members saw the replacement of more recruits into their ranks. The United States believed that this battle would be limited to the borders of Afghanistan, but the conflict has spilled into central Asia and Africa. The United States and its allies do not have the capacity to continue in this fight. The results prove that the escalation in military campaigns does not decrease the threat, but it will pave the way for more conflicts. The United States and its allies will need to adjust its policies pertaining to the Islamic world. The United States now believes that it should empower moderate Islamists to counter military recruitment by fundamentalists. The U.S. reticence to continue supporting dictators such as Zine el Abideen bin Ali (former Tunisian president), Hosni Mubarak (former Egyptian president) and, Yemeni President Abdullah Saleh and begin supporting the people of Libya against Kaddafi caused the moderate Islamic groups to gain power in these countries. These changes in policy by the United States in the rest of the Islamic world should apply also to the situation in Afghanistan if the Taliban can continue to distance itself from al Qaeda and other extremist fundamentalist organizations. If so, the United States should embrace the Taliban's political office in Qatar to begin the campaign of establishing peace.

When the conflict reached a stalemate: Winning of hearts and minds against riots

The anti-riot manual of U.S. General Stanley McCrystal, the commander of I.S.A.F. in Afghanistan, 27 July 2010, indicated that rather than fighting riots, we should "win the hearts and minds" of Afghans to avoid further inflaming the populaces' sentiments against the United States. In this manual, the I.S.A.F. asked them to fight with "order and discipline" during attacks, using weapons

when needed, and the United States and its allies will win the battle without fighting. Victory cannot be achieved through killing and capturing alone. Moreover, if forces continue killing civilians or injuring them during operations, more insurgents will be created than the numbers that are killed.

But there are many powerful figures in the United States who disagree with General McCrystal's counter insurgency strategy. They concluded that General David Petraeus should relieve the command of General McCrystal. Gen. Petraeus did not follow the advice of McCrystal's counter-insurgency strategy, replacing it with a counter terrorism strategy causing more civilian casualties and ultimately resulting in the Taliban gaining power each day. This strategy used by the Russians in Afghanistan also failed. Mao Zedong believed that the main aim of the guerilla fighter was to maintain popular support of the people. Because the United States failed in this endeavor, it is advisable that they embrace negotiations because they cannot win over the Afghans who view the Americans and their allies as occupying forces.

The United States and the Karzai government's demands for the Taliban:

- They should put down their weapons and avoid violations.
- Sever contacts with terrorist groups.
- Accept the Afghanistan constitution.

In other words, the Taliban must surrender.

The U.S. officials sent their request to the political office for the Taliban, in Qatar. The United States wanted an official statement from the Taliban condemning terrorism, but they refused. The Taliban's refusal is based on their disagreement over the U.S. definition of "terrorism" and the Islamic world's. On the other hand, the accepting of the Qatar process by the Taliban means a divorce from al-Qaida, because the network has rejected any contacts with the United States. But, the United States has entered the Haqqani group, led by Maulvi and Sirajuddin Haqqani, on their blacklist. This group is a part of the Taliban meaning that the United States has closed the door to negotiations with Taliban.

The Taliban demands for the United States

- Exit of foreign troops from Afghanistan.
- Free all captives.
- Remove the names of Taliban leaders from the blacklist.

The international media has created this image that the main purpose of the Taliban in the negotiations is the freedom of five of its members. But, this request only creates good faith between the two parties of peace negotiators; it is not a condition for peace. The Taliban has also refused any kind of negotiation with the Afghan government. But the United States does not want to weaken the under-supported government of Hamid Karzai by excluding it from the peace process.

Why the Taliban preferred Qatar as the center of negotiation?

The Taliban has termed the following conditions for intermediation country to negotiate with the United States:

1. The intermediary should be an Islamic country.
2. The intermediary should not be a neighboring country because if a neighbor organizes this meeting, the others will fight for influence over Afghan policies. Competing foreign interests do not benefit Afghanistan.
3. intermediary should not inhabit a military base in Afghanistan. This would exclude Turkey and the United Arab Emirate because they have military bases in Afghanistan.
4. intermediary must have good relations with the Taliban during the last ten years.

Pakistan's opposition to the Qatar peace process:

In 2011, when the Taliban agreed with having their political office in Qatar, Pakistan became concerned and tried to weaken it. Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (I.S.I.) officials had several meetings with the United States regarding this decision.

On 31 January 2012, with cooperation of Jamaat-e Islami a

seminar "Situation of Afghanistan and its Effect on the Area" was arranged in Peshawar. Some high-ranking former I.S.I. officers, such as General Hamid Gul and General Assad Durani, both previous directors of the intelligence agency, participated at this seminar. General Gul openly stated that the United States proceeded without Pakistan. Gul continued, "I believe that the Qatar process is a failure, and the United States has another objective behind this and the United States is not truthful in this process". Pakistan's aim was for the meeting to be organized under the supervision of Pakistan in another location in order to deny benefits from the United States. Pakistan also has a history of aiding the mujahidin after the Russian invasion, and, most importantly, Pakistan signed the Geneva Compact in 1988, instead of the jihadists, that set the date for the Soviet withdrawal.

The regional objectives of the United States in Afghanistan

One of the obstacles to the peace process was the ambiguous purpose of the United States in the region. In a meeting with political analysts, Hamid Karzai indicated that he is absolutely positive that the United States is following other important objectives in the region. Yet, he cannot be certain of the identity of these objectives.

Some possibilities will be summarized as follows:

- To restrain China: China is an economic giant and a rival to the United States. If China cannot be contained, it will become a super power changing the world into a bipolar atmosphere once again. The outburst of a super power with an eastern tendency can replace the western values in the world and would be dreadful incubus for the United States and for all western countries. China is a country located near the untouched reserves in Afghanistan and central Asia, and mine extractions and other energy reserves are inexpensive for China. It has also signed several contracts for the extraction of oil and copper in Afghanistan. They are also close to an agreement on the extraction of iron with the Afghan government.
- The American bases in Afghanistan are located towards the

east and would be threats for Russia by denying them access to the Middle East. For this reason, Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia has stated that the presence of the U.S. troops is un-justified in the area because since the United States could not defeat terrorism with 150 thousand troops, then they cannot expect to defeat them with less than that number. Thus, the United States has unknown interests in the area and they should explain their intentions.

- The presence of the U.S. troops can be a threat for Iran: the challenges between the United States and Iran can have negative impact on the peace process in Afghanistan.
- For containing China: India will play the best role in Afghanistan in mining and energy reserves extractions. The United States is encouraging India to compete with China in Afghanistan, but this competition will aggravate Pakistan further.

Challenges for the prolonged presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan

The United States believes that after signing strategic and security agreements with the Afghanistan government, the Afghan security force will take over all security responsibilities after 2014 and the U.S. responsibilities will be limited. By signing these compacts, the United States wants the Afghan people to fight amongst each other while the U.S. troops remain safe in their bases. Also, the United States will decrease its military expenses by then. But the United States doesn't want to avoid conflict with the Taliban forever. They are seeking an excuse that the U.S. Congress cannot oppose. By entering the Haqqani group on the terrorist blacklist, the White House can attack the Taliban as a sponsor of terror. The United States wants this flexibility to attack the Taliban as part of its "war on terror".

The presence of U.S. troops in the region will create unrest and the area will remain unsafe.

- Progression of indirect conflict: when the conflict continues, the regional countries will try to create challenges against the U.S. interests in Afghanistan, and these challenges will cause indirect

conflicts in the region. Afghans will have to suffer foreign interference and the repercussions that it brings.

- Controlling of Afghanistan through partition: after the United States becomes more weary of the conflict in Afghanistan, the second plan on the table is the partition of Afghanistan under "Plan B" and "Plan C". These plans are calamitous for a land locked country like Afghanistan. Thus, these plans will create problems in China's goals to mine iron and uranium, and to extract gas and oil from their precious reserves.

Results

Afghanistan is a constant battleground where nobody arises as a victor. It has reached dangerous place in its history. Afghanistan defeated one super power, the Soviets, and the people of Afghanistan have experienced the pain and suffering of each exchange. By examining their war tattered past, they have little hope and remain uncertain of their future. These last three decades of conflicts have solidified this truth about war in Afghanistan: everybody loses. When the Soviets left Afghanistan, did the mujahidin win?

After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) the Mujahidin failed in establishing a national government. They also failed to counter the rise of the Taliban. As a result of internal conflict, the Taliban seized control of the country. But the Taliban refused to accept other ethnicities and therefor was destined to fail.

The military invasion from the United States after 9/11, at first was counted as a victory, but the continuation of conflict caused the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) to be involved in a long-term conflict in Afghanistan. And after 11 years of conflict they have lost hope in seeing any possibility of a plausible victory, and now they are developing an exit strategy.

Afghanistan's two options:

The result of this conflict is the realization of the improbability of victory in Afghanistan. We should learn from the historical lessons of land wars in Afghanistan. First, Afghans should accept

each other. Second, Afghans should have the ability to govern themselves.

The partitioning of a landlocked country like Afghanistan to use its natural resources for economic development is not a wise option. And creating new borders to foment further internal conflict only benefits those countries wanting to utilize the natural resources in Afghanistan.

Qatar process is the path toward inter-Afghani negotiations

At the end of 2011, when the news surfaced announcing the new political office for the Taliban in Qatar, expectations for possible peace caused excitement. Before this, all Afghan efforts by the government to establish the High Peace Council were unsuccessful. Unfortunately, neither the United States nor the Afghanistan government presented any plans for making peace with the Taliban that did not involve and outright surrender. Mullah Mohammad Omar showed his trust in this Qatar peace process by sending his political team to meet. In his "Eid-ul-Fetr address," Mullah Omar stated his concerns for a negotiation outlining the conditions for his approval, mainly the adherence to sharia, without abandoning the prospects for peace.

With whom is the Taliban meeting?

The formal position of the Taliban is not to have exclusive power and Mullah Omar stated in his Eid message, "Once again, I want to tell you that I am not eager to get power and not to continue the internal conflict, but our effort is to stop mediation of the super powers and neighboring countries in our country and our future should be designed with us." So, reaching this point without an all-inclusive, Afghan involvement in negotiations is impossible.

At this point, we should have a formal address from the Taliban for arranging meetings with their political opposition including the Karzai government. But, the Taliban has rejected negotiation with this government. The government also wants to negotiate with the opposition leaders, tribal leaders, and all others in the inter-Afghani meeting. All issues including governmental structure, the presence

of external forces, and those regarding the future of Afghanistan will be discussed in this meeting. By considering the serious condition of Afghanistan and the world, the Qatar office should be opened as soon as possible.

However, the Taliban postponed the meeting with the United States in April because of the nonalignment of U.S. commitment. It was said that Obama also was not eager to continue this meeting because of the U.S. presidential election. But since Obama won reelection, we hope this process will be rejuvenated. Afghans remain hopeful for a peaceful settlement in Qatar.

The International Community must Support the Qatar Process for Afghanistan

After the attacks of 9/11, the United Nation's Security Council (U.N.S.C.) issued the resolution for the invasion of Afghanistan, and then, participated in Afghanistan for the First Bonn Conference. As the war in Afghanistan has reached a stalemate, this council must play an effective role to bring peace to the country. The U.N. is going to launch a meeting in Turkmenistan where Afghan groups including the Taliban will participate. This meeting will be an opportunity for Afghans to explore each other's ideas for the future of their country.

Our request is that, Organization of Islamic Countries also plays an active role in this process. Afghan people appreciate the part Islamic scholars play in this group. For creating peace in the country, Afghanistan needs the support of Islamic countries, and it would appreciate further cooperation by Qatar, the host, of this noble process. Afghanistan requests that the international community supports the process of peace at the Qatari meeting.

Chapter Eight

Targeted Killings and the Temptation of Drone Technology: A Strategic and Political Debacle

Livia Nassius and Mark LeVine

In recent months, drones have become the scandal of the day in American foreign and domestic politics. The Barack Obama Administration has been under attack for the president's direct involvement in the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) covert operations in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. These operations are using combat and surveillance drones to conduct "targeted killings" and reconnaissance missions in an effort to decapitate al-Qaida leadership. Official objectives of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy are to destroy and eliminate al-Qaida in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other regions of Asia and the Middle East. They use drones to kill "high-value targets". In acting out this strategy, the CIA, the civilian government agency, has killed American citizens. Most shockingly, details about the counterterrorism approach of the CIA under President Obama have revealed little change since his predecessor. This scandal has evolved to include issues of international and domestic law, counterterrorism, foreign policy goals, and concerns over the kind of changes drone technology will bring to warfare across the globe. Drones will have a significant impact on security, war, and counterterrorism.

While the drone scandal centers mainly on the CIA-run program in Pakistan, drones are and will continue to be present in Afghanistan. Their impact in the latter country is overshadowed by

the scandal about the former. The mere fact that drones are under military oversight in Afghanistan makes them and the consequences of their armed strikes less of a newsworthy story. It is, indeed, shocking that a civilian agency is killing people outside of active theatres of war on a large scale. The political fallout from existent and emerging details of the CIA-run drone program will, therefore, have the greatest impact on legislation and oversight. Thus, an examination of drones cannot be divorced from addressing the CIA Similarly, the future stability and security of Afghanistan cannot be separated from the future of Pakistan and its Federally Administered Tribal Areas (F.A.T.A.). Much of the recent media attention has concentrated on combat drones; but, it is important to note, the majority of drones in the battlefield are used for surveillance and reconnaissance missions and are unarmed.

This chapter will examine the use of armed drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan (since the two states are intrinsically linked on this issue), and arguments will be presented regarding their misuse and their ramifications. The main theme is the significant strategic costs to U.S. counterterrorism, counterinsurgency goals in these states, and how these costs have been lost in the media and political debate. Criticism from both the media and the political establishment tends to avoid the implications of the strategic and human costs of drones. The lack of proper debate will impact the future North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission in Afghanistan, and the future of that state. The U.S. drone policy, their influence on policies abroad, and their methods of warfare will inevitably evolve.

This article will attempt to sift through the vast surge of recent reporting and discussion on the use of drones by the CIA, U.S. military and NATO in order to provide a concise overview of the issue. With sections on the advent of drone technology, the political debate in Washington, and an examination of the role of drones after the end of the war in Afghanistan, this article will underline the most important points of contention and relevant information. It is therefore necessary to examine this technology, its origins, and the methods of its use.

What are drones?

Drones are commonly referred to as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (U.A.V.s) if they are purely unarmed reconnaissance drones and Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (U.C.A.V.s) if they are capable of shooting missiles. They are part of the movement in military technology, which seeks to robotize certain functions in order to save soldiers' lives on the battlefront. At first, drones were used solely as reconnaissance tools with sensitive cameras, tracking systems, and the mechanical capacity to fly for hundreds of hours. Eventually, however, they were weaponized.

The most commonly known combat drone is called the "Predator". This U.C.A.V. is a mid-sized, armed drone capable of deploying Hellfire, laser-guided missiles. The larger model is called the "Reaper". Regular combat drones are based on traditional aircraft that fly with the capability of deploying missiles. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan served as a testing ground for this new military technology. U.S.-NATO military command in Afghanistan has begun battlefield tests on a new type of drone called the "Switchblade" that uses the aircraft as a missile. Launched from a tube and with unfolding wings, this small drone acts like a missile detonating on command or when hitting a previously programmed target.

Drones in Afghanistan are flown by "pilots", in the Nevada Desert's Creech Air Force Base, thousands of kilometers from the battlefield. They use videogame-style controllers to pilot the drones making their use incredibly user-friendly and most importantly, a safer alternative than a direct assault that could cost U.S. lives.

By relying on this technology, the United States has encouraged the growth of an industry for weapons that have inspired great concern. The United States is no longer alone in the investment in this technology. Numerous other states have already acquired drones or the capability to build their own. The military robotics industry is booming, and its history and future is closely linked to war.

Brief History of Drone Technology

The history of drones is a culmination of technological advancements that span the twentieth century and can be aligned with general advancements in science. A leading scholar on the development of drones and robotics, in general, P. W. Singer, classifies them as military robots, and he refers to innovations in science as contributing to the invention of drones as they are known today. World War I saw many similar technological leaps forward in weaponry that inspired great concern, making this debate hardly unprecedented.

For the past fifty years, the United States and its military robotics industry has been growing. Despite many setbacks and intermittent support from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), technology has kept the pace with ideas. In 1962, the Ryan aeronautical firm secured $1.1 million from the U.S. military and built the first drone called the "Fire Fly". It flew over Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War, but they abandoned this technology. In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, drones made a comeback. One drone flew with the invasion force and into Iraq quite successfully. But, on 8 February 2000, the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee declared that "one-third of all aircraft designed to attack behind enemy lines be unmanned...." that the industry got the boost it needed. The U.S. military research and its purchasing power set it on course to become the present day industry.

Technological maturity and political changes finally came together in the early 2000s. Part of the allure of U.A.V. technology, not only drones but ground robots, was the increasing fear in the United States of casualties in the post-Cold War era. These changes were made crystal clear through the experiences of Kosovo, Somalia, and culminating in the refusal to intervene in the genocide in Rwanda, and the Balkans. U.A.V. technology, therefore, was a logical answer to minimizing troop exposure to danger in future missions and operations.

Military spending grew, much to the benefit of the drone industry, due to the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the "global war on terror". In the six years after 9/11, the national defense budget was

increased by 74 percent. In addition, evidence points to increases in the Pentagon's secret "black budget", and a substantial amount of funds going into developing this technology. Although, defense budgets have been cut under President Obama, funding for combat drones has increased across the U.S. armed forces with each branch receiving $1.5 -$2.3 billion for combat-drone acquisition. Demand for this technology continues growing; in the next decade the drone market will likely surpass $11.3 billion a year.

According to available records, November 2001 was the first time the "Predator" drone accomplished a "targeted-killing". The United States targeted Mohammed Atef, a leading al-Qaida military commander, and killed him in Kabul, Afghanistan. Following in 2008, President George W. Bush ordered the first drone strike in Pakistan. In the beginning of 2009, drones killed almost half of the twenty most powerful al-Qaida leaders. In military operations in Afghanistan last year, drone strikes amounted to nine percent of all aerial attacks. With the future of the American military appearing increasingly reliant on drones, public debate began to surface regarding the implications of this technology.

The Politics of Drones

The unearthing of details pertaining to the counterterrorism approach of the CIA under President Obama has revealed its similarity to the approach of his predecessor. President Obama campaigned as a candidate who disagreed with: the existence of the U.S. prison facilities at Guantanamo Bay; the Iraq War; and, appeared to offer a more peace oriented foreign policy. Most supporters seemed bewildered concerning the policies changes of President Obama, compared to candidate Obama. I fear that the Bush Administration's overstepping of power and its intelligence blunders have continued and morphed into something new, and just as ethically and strategically questionable.

A Brief Overview of the Drones Debate in U.S. Politics

The political debate in Washington regarding drone killings began with the confirmation hearings for John O. Brennan for the position

of director of the CIA. During this time, a "white paper" was leaked to the media summarizing the legal arguments the administration used to justify drones attacks on American members of al-Qaida. The administration has been reluctant to release the document with its complete legal justifications. Upon this revelation, the media geared into action and government representatives demanded access to more information. It quickly became evident that drone strikes and targeted killings by the CIA had been conducted without any meaningful congressional oversight. Although journalists had been reporting on this program for several years, this issue truly exploded into public view during these confirmation hearings.

The U.S. Congress fails to grasp the gravity of the situation, and today criticism from politicians has fallen sharply. Politicians seem torn between their party loyalties and the ramifications of this scandal. Some Democrats have criticized the president vocally, but most have used letters of protest. Republican reaction, in contrast, coincides with their counterterrorism policies. Following the 2009 arrest of Farouk Abdul Mutallab, former-Vice President Dick Cheney chided President Obama about his administration's legal pursuit of terrorists, claiming Mutallab was read his Miranda rights. This procedure was necessary for a court trial in the United States. Thus, even the rule of law was too great of a privilege for a captured al-Qaida operative.

Americans fail to challenge policymakers despite this diverging policy. In March 2013, Senator Rand Paul filibustered the senate confirmation of Mr. Brennan, arguing against the use of drones on American soil, although this had little to do with Mr. Brennan or the CIA. This argument does not touch on drones abroad, and therefore, arguably turned the debate away from the impact of the CIA targeted killing program. A brief overview of the U.S. media discussion of drones today would focus primarily on their domestic use. The foreign policy aspect takes priority over human rights and the long-term costs on the populations living in fear.

Months of criticism finally made an impact in March 2013. Senator Diane Feinstein, chairwoman for the Senate Intelligence Committee, told Capitol Hill reporters that after monitoring the CIA drone program, including its intelligence and decision-making,

they had gained confidence in the agency's work. Instead, she aimed criticism towards the Pentagon-run program. In light of these remarks, it surprises the author, that the Obama administration is moving the CIA drone program to the Pentagon. There is speculation that it will ease political pressure on the agency and alleviate the questions of legality from the administration's shoulders. Nonetheless, this move is against Senator Feinstein's assessment.

Central Criticisms: Transparency and Targeted Killings

Transparency and legality remain at the heart of the drone debacle. These questions undermine common assumptions of their strategic advantages, as the efficacy of drone use cannot legitimately be called into question as long as the true civilian cost of their use remains hidden. Under President Obama, the frequency of combat drone use has grown exponentially; his administration has overwhelmingly favored them in counterterrorism and military operations. In Pakistan, from June 2004-October 2012, there were 334 drone strikes. This policy is highlighted by President Obama's choice of Mr. Brennan, often depicted as the leading actor and key adviser behind the current drone policy, as the next director of the CIA. Casualty numbers are difficult to calculate and official numbers are sometimes misleading or mere speculation. Accurate and detailed information from the U.S. government (including the military) is difficult to access and misleading.

Road Blocks to Information

Advocates of drone strikes often refer to their accuracy citing minimal civilian casualties. This argument, regularly treated as "fact", justifies further drone strikes. The accuracy of these strikes remains a point of contention, however. The lack of transparency and information hinders this argument.

The DoD fails to record civilian casualties of drone strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Official statistics are unavailable from the CIA due to their clandestine nature. The current method of tracking civilian casualties depends on the classification of military-age males as "militants". Determining their true status occurs after

the attack. Thus, the DoD underestimates civilian casualties and inflates successful killings.

The availability of information on DoD drone operations in Afghanistan exists as a contentious topic. The Air Force has removed statistics related to air strikes launched by combat drones in Afghanistan in March 2013. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) explained this action stating that these statistics "disproportionately focused on R.P.A. [remotely piloted aircraft] kinetic events". Arguably, CENTCOM is uncomfortable with the how these statistics, concerning the quantity of airstrikes and the amount of ordinance launched, fed into the drone scandal. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that one civilian casualty dies per every four or five al-Qaida suspects killed in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.

Targeting the Enemy: Tactics over Strategy

Several questions surround targeted killings. What is the quality of intelligence used to decide if a suspect becomes a target? Who, ultimately, orders these attacks? A national security panel often decides targets. But, President Obama decides when a strike may inflict an above average amount of civilian casualties or when reconnaissance leaves uncertainty. President Obama treads a thin line of constitutional, domestic, and international law. It is hard to assess the legal questions when the nature of the decision-making process and its execution is shrouded by the premise of "national security".

Michael Boyle calls the method of distinguishing civilian casualties from militants "guilt by association". It presupposes adult males and their associates, such as villagers or family members, as militants or combatants. This approach is "violat[ing] the principle of noncombatant immunity that lies at the heart of international humanitarian law". The use of "targeted-killing" by a state is legally controversial and in the U.S. case, both the former-Bush Administration and the Obama Administration used legal loopholes to narrow the scope of the definition of war. Targeted-killings are defined as "...extra-judicial, premeditated killing by a state of a specifically identified person not in its custody".

If, on the tactical level, targeted killings executed by combat drones are questionably efficient, can they be useful on the strategic level? Several scholars have argued contrarily; drones have yet to prove themselves as a method of countering terrorism. The elimination of a leader of a terrorist group will not always hinder the group's activities. In Pakistan, the constant breach of sovereignty and the appearance of weakness in the face of American power damage the legitimacy of their government. Pakistan is undermined in the regions where it needs to build itself to counter extremist groups. It is not surprising that Pakistani politicians chose to publicly denounce drones while secretly supporting them. Accordingly, "...74 percent of Pakistanis now consider the United States an enemy" that illustrates the level of anti-American sentiment in the country. These consequences contradict the official goals of the Obama Administration's "National Strategy for Counterterrorism".

The United States remains dependent on cooperation with the Afghan and Pakistani governments. It is clear that drone strikes have impacted the relationship of the United States and these countries. The social costs of drone warfare might be non-existent in the United States, but the Afghan and Pakistani populations live in terror. The "blowback", or unintended consequences for the use of drones, motivates new al-Qaida and Taliban recruits. The scale of targeted killings justifies all this attention. It calls into question, whether this method builds a stable Afghanistan and F.A.T.A. in Pakistan. Afghanistan offers different challenges from Pakistan; the N.A.T.O mission has officially committed itself to nation-building and securing the country. The next section will examine the impact of drone policies on Afghanistan.

Drones over Afghanistan

The role of drones in Afghanistan, in contrast to their role in Pakistan, centers on the counterinsurgency goals of the International Security Assistance Force (I.S.A.F.). NATO has integrated drones, both armed and unarmed, into its operations in Afghanistan, and their impact on the population has been severe. However, due to links between al-Qaida, the Taliban, and actors in Pakistan's F.A.T.A., media coverage of CIA operations are regularly joined

with coverage of Afghanistan. Thus, the effects of drones on I.S.A.F. counterinsurgency objectives are often unclearly reported. That is to say, the media and academia rarely distinguish between drone policies in the two states. The distinction usually begins and ends with the Pentagon operating drones in Afghanistan, not the CIA.

American national security interests and the ability to secure them are at the heart of the debate over the future strategy in Afghanistan. The strategy of large-scale military involvement has been discarded for one that is advertised to have a smaller "footprint." This second strategy relies on combat drones as one of the main methods of force. Although, limitations exist, I.S.A.F. refuses to target buildings, due to potential civilian casualties (indicating a higher standard of minimizing collateral damage then the CIA), and cannot conduct cross-border drone strikes.

The Costs and Benefits of Afghanistan's Future

Recently the American military conceded that their counterinsurgency tactics resulted in retaliation, increased recruitment to these organizations, culminating into an effect that is opposite of what was intended. As a result, decreasing civilian casualties became a higher priority. However, CIA operations in Pakistan have an adverse effect on I.S.A.F.'s strategies of winning "hearts and minds", thus limiting the coalition's achievements.

The United States officially views drones as a safer, cost-effective and advantageous technology on the battlefield. All drones have been categorized as extremely efficient weapons and tools. Furthermore, considering defense budget cuts and the looming "end" of the Afghanistan War, drones offer a less expensive method of fighting al-Qaida and other enemies. Also, public opinion increasingly has little patience for drawn out wars. It is no wonder that future military activities will rely heavily on these military robots.

NATO announced that its role in Afghanistan would change once I.S.A.F.'s transitioning security timelines pass. Although the main message states that NATO forces are, "moving from a combat to a training, mentoring and supporting role by 2015". There is also a secondary strategy. This long-term strategy involves, among

other efforts, continued action against the Taliban and the areas it controls. NATO forces in order to capture or kill Taliban leaders will target these areas.

It is important to consider what legal framework will be used for the continuation of lethal activities there. Using an interpretation of the legal framework established by the "War on Terror" doctrine, the United States reserves the right to "...the use of lethal force against enemies in a foreign country when a state 'consents or is unable or unwilling' to act", and addresses terrorism-linked threats independently. The over-arching logic clashes with the sovereignty of those states, which have historical experience with colonialism.

Afghanistan will continue to struggle with extremist groups and other dangerous actors with local, regional and global plans. Moreover, the inseparability of Pakistan from Afghanistan is a constant strategic thorn in NATO's side. It is also a major security obstacle for the U.S. counterterrorism concerns. The United States involves itself in Pakistan and particularly in the F.A.T.A. by chasing the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and al-Qaida. Since Pakistani extremist groups increasingly cooperate in the conflict in Afghanistan, they gain valuable experience to use against Pakistan. It is not surprising that the CIA wages a covert operation in the F.A.T.A. Security concerns over these extremist groups tie these countries' fates together.

India-Pakistan relations are also at risk since the two countries compete for influence in Afghanistan. "Pakistani politicians have begun to talk about the resolution of the Afghan conflict as more important than Kashmir in terms of defining their country's relations with India." With this larger picture in mind, creating stability in Afghanistan becomes a greater priority.

Once the 2014 deadline passes and the U.S. and I.S.A.F. forces withdraw, it will become necessary to monitor military activities under NATO. President Obama stated that 2014 marks the end of the war in Afghanistan. Yet, NATO will remain with an ambiguous and questionable role.

Protecting the remaining forces become a priority for NATO other than the multitude of objectives linked to the mission there;

drones will play an active role regardless of the character of the mission. Since NATO and the United States set the example to the world for adhering to international law, especially regarding those pertaining to armed conflict, the legality of its actions and the interpretations of the applicable laws have lasting and global ramifications.

Conclusion

Drone policy and their use in conflict remains a topic laced with uncertainty, complexity, and potential grave consequences if left unchecked by major powers. The United States has many reasons to continue deploying these drones, which is apparent in their use over the past decade. In comparison to "Dresden-style strategic bombing", drones incur less collateral damage. This, in conjunction with the fact that they are cheap and safe to use for American soldiers, does not necessarily mean they are the correct strategic course of action for the Obama Administration.

Long-term concerns must be the focus for the Obama Administration. The governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan will never become viable partners in protecting American security interests if their populations and electorates view them as an enemy. It is simply not viable in the long-term. How long will the United States continue targeted killings? As the United States kills al-Qaida leadership, new individuals may take their place. When will the United States retreat completely from these areas? President Obama must balance counterterrorism and counterinsurgency objectives in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the grievances of its people. Domestic pressures, like the budget deficit and public aversion to war, constrain his choices. International actors worry about the last decade of drone use creating a problematic precedent for drone use in conflicts. This technology's proliferation, into the militaries of various states, adds another layer of uncertainty.

Since the CIA has been removed from operating drones, the Obama Administration may be in the process of reconsidering its policies. Media attention and subsequent congressional criticism has impacted the drone policy and perhaps we will see improvement. With the planned shift, perhaps the CIA-run program will be

tempered by military regulation and experience in adhering to international law. If President Obama is serious about changing his drone policy, the future of the I.S.A.F. mission is an opportunity for improving his track record. It will correct some of the worst norms of drone warfare, such as favoring domestic politics and short-term tactical gains over long-term security strategies. Should this opportunity be missed, the pattern already witnessed in Afghanistan and Pakistan could be solidified, becoming an ever-present feature of drone use for many years to come.

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Chapter Nine

Breaking Up Is Not Hard to Do: Why the US-Pakistan Alliance Isn't Worth the Trouble

Hussain Haqqani

Washington has not had an easy time managing the U.S.-Pakistani relationship, to put it mildly. For decades, the United States has sought to change Pakistan's strategic focus from competing with India and seeking more influence in Afghanistan to protecting its own internal stability and economic development. But even though Pakistan has continued to depend on U.S. military and economic support, it has not changed its behavior much. Each country accuses the other of being a terrible ally -- and perhaps both are right.

Pakistanis tend to think of the United States as a bully. In their view, Washington provides desperately needed aid intermittently, yanking it away whenever U.S. officials want to force policy changes. Pakistanis believe that Washington has never been grateful for the sacrifice of the thousands of Pakistani military and security officials who have died fighting terrorists in recent decades, nor mourned the tens of thousands of Pakistani civilians whom those terrorists have killed. Many in the country, including President Asif Ali Zardari and General Ashfaq Kayani, the army chief, recognize that Pakistan has at times gone off the American script, but they argue that the country would be a better ally if only the United States showed more sensitivity to Islamabad's regional concerns.

On the other side, Americans see Pakistan as the ungrateful recipient of almost $40 billion in economic and military assistance

since 1947, $23 billion of it for fighting terrorism over the last decade alone. In their view, Pakistan has taken American dollars with a smile, even as it covertly developed nuclear weapons in the 1980s, passed nuclear secrets to others in the 1990s, and supported Islamist militant groups more recently. No matter what Washington does, according to a growing cadre of U.S. senators, members of Congress, and editorial writers, it can't count on Pakistan as a reliable ally. Meanwhile, large amounts of U.S. aid have simply failed to invigorate Pakistan's economy.

The May 2011 U.S. covert operation in Abbottabad that killed Osama bin Laden brought the relationship to an unusually low point, making it harder than ever to maintain the illusion of friendship. At this point, instead of continuing to fight so constantly for so little benefit -- money for Pakistan, limited intelligence cooperation for the United States, and a few tactical military gains for both sides -- the two countries should acknowledge that their interests simply do not converge enough to make them strong partners. By coming to terms with this reality, Washington would be freer to explore new ways of pressuring Pakistan and achieving its own goals in the region. Islamabad, meanwhile, could finally pursue its regional ambitions, which would either succeed once and for all or, more likely, teach Pakistani officials the limitations of their country's power.

Friend Request

It is tempting to believe that tensions between the United States and Pakistan have never been worse. And to be sure, the public in each country currently dislikes the other: in a 2011 Gallup poll, Pakistan ranked among the least liked countries in the United States, along with Iran and North Korea; meanwhile, a 2012 Pew poll found that 80 percent of Pakistanis have an unfavorable view of the United States, with 74 percent seeing it as an enemy. Washington's threats to cut off aid to Pakistan and calls in Islamabad to defend Pakistani sovereignty from U.S. drone incursions seem to represent a friendship that is spiraling downward.

But the relationship between the United States and Pakistan has never been good. In 2002, at arguably the height of U.S.-

Pakistani cooperation against terrorism, a Pew poll found that 63 percent of Americans had unfavorable views of Pakistan, making it the fifth most disliked nation, behind Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and North Korea. Before that, in 1980, soon after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a Harris poll showed that a majority of Americans viewed Pakistan unfavorably, despite the fact that 53 percent supported U.S. military action to defend the country against communism. During the 1950s and 1960s, Pakistan did not feature in U.S. opinion polls, but its leaders often complained of unfavorable press in the United States.

Pakistani distaste for the United States is nothing new, either. A 2002 Pew poll found that about 70 percent of Pakistanis disapproved of the United States. And their negativity predates the war on terrorism. The September 1982 issue of The Journal of Conflict Resolution carried an article by the Pakistani civil servant Shafqat Naghmi based on analysis of keywords used in the Pakistani press between 1965 and 1979. He found evidence for widespread anti-Americanism going back to the beginning of the study. In 1979, a hostile crowd burned down the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, and attacks on U.S. official buildings in Pakistan were reported even in the 1950s and 1960s.

From Pakistan's founding onward, the two countries have tried to paper over their divergent interests and the fact that their publics do not trust one another with personal friendships at the highest levels. In 1947, Pakistan's leaders confronted an uncertain future. Most of the world was indifferent to the new country -- that is, except for its giant next-door neighbor, which was uncompromisingly hostile. The partition of British India had given Pakistan a third of the former colony's army but only a sixth of its sources of revenue. From birth, therefore, Pakistan was saddled with a huge army it could not pay for and plenty of monsters to destroy.

British officials and scholars, such as Sir Olaf Caroe, who was the pre-partition governor of the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), and Ian Stephens, the editor of The Statesman, encouraged Pakistan's founding fathers to keep the country's large army as a protection against India. Lacking financing for it, though, Pakistani leaders turned to the United

States, reasoning that Washington would be willing to foot some of the bill given Pakistan's strategically important location at the intersection of the Middle East and South Asia.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the country's founder and first governor-general, and most of his lieutenants in the Muslim League, Pakistan's main political party, had never traveled to the United States and knew little about the country. To fill the role of ambassador to the United States, they chose the one among them who had, Mirza Abol Hassan Ispahani, who had toured the United States in the mid-1940s to drum up support for an independent Muslim state in South Asia. In a November 1946 letter to Jinnah, Ispahani explained what he knew of the American psyche. "I have learnt that sweet words and first impressions count a lot with Americans," he wrote. "They are inclined to quickly like or dislike an individual or organization." The Cambridge-educated lawyer tried his best to make a good impression and became known among the Washington elite for his erudition and sartorial style.

Back in Pakistan, Jinnah attempted to befriend Paul Alling, the newly appointed U.S. ambassador in Karachi, then Pakistan's capital. In one of their meetings, Jinnah complained about the sweltering heat and offered to sell his official residence to the U.S. embassy. The ambassador sent him a gift of four ceiling fans. Jinnah was also at pains to give interviews to U.S. journalists, the best known of whom was Life magazine's Margaret Bourke-White. "America needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs America," Jinnah told her. "Pakistan is the pivot of the world, the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves." Like many Pakistani leaders after him, Jinnah hinted that he hoped the United States would pour money and arms into Pakistan. And Bourke-White, like many Americans after her, was skeptical. She sensed that behind the bluster was insecurity and a "bankruptcy of ideas . . . a nation drawing its spurious warmth from the embers of an antique religious fanaticism, fanned into a new blaze."

The visceral anti-Americanism among many Pakistanis today makes it difficult to remember how persistently Jinnah and his ambassadors lobbied the United States for recognition and friendship in those earlier years. Yet the Americans were not

convinced. As a State Department counselor, George Kennan, for example, saw no value in having Pakistan as an ally. In 1949, when he met Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, Kennan responded to Khan's request to back Pakistan over India by saying, "Our friends must not expect us to do things which we cannot do. It is no less important that they should not expect us to be things which we cannot be." Kennan's message was reflected in the paltry amount of U.S. aid sent to the new country: of the $2 billion Jinnah had requested in September 1947, only $10 million came through. That dropped to just over half a million dollars in 1948, and to zero in 1949 and 1950.

Brothers In Arms

Pakistan finally got what it wanted with the election of Dwight Eisenhower in 1952. His secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, embraced the idea of exchanging aid for Pakistani support of U.S. strategic interests. He saw Pakistan as a vital link in his scheme to encircle the Soviet Union and China. The aggressively anticommunist Dulles also relished the thought of having a large army of professional soldiers with British-trained officers on the right side in the Cold War. Influenced by earlier descriptions of Pakistanis, Dulles believed them to be especially martial: "I've got to get some real fighting men in the south of Asia," he told the journalist Walter Lippmann in 1954. "The only Asians who can really fight are the Pakistanis."

Muhammad Ali Bogra, who had taken up the post of Pakistani ambassador to the United States in 1952, was also eager to cement the friendship. He was as successful as his predecessor at cultivating American elites, especially Dulles, who was already leery of India's leaders due to their decision to stay nonaligned during the Cold War. Bogra ensured that his own anticommunist sentiments were well known to Dulles, as well as to the journalists and politicians with whom Bogra went bowling in Washington. Meanwhile, Eisenhower tasked Arthur Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with earning the respect of powerful Pakistanis -- particularly the military commander General Muhammad Ayub Khan, who would rule the country by the end of the decade. Ayub Khan was instrumental in

installing Bogra as Pakistan's prime minister in 1953, after a palace coup, in the hope that Bogra's friendship with the Americans would expedite the flow of arms and development assistance to Pakistan. Indeed, military and economic aid to Pakistan began to rise rapidly; it would hit $1.7 billion by the end of the decade.

In return, the United States got Pakistan to join two anti-Soviet security arrangements: the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, in 1954, and the Baghdad Pact (later called the Central Treaty Organization), in 1955. But there were already signs of trouble. Any notion that Pakistan would join either alliance grouping in a war was quickly dispelled, as Pakistan (like many others) refused to contribute much money or any forces to the organizations. Dulles traveled to Pakistan in 1954 looking for military bases for use against the Soviet Union and China. On his return, he tried to conceal his disappointment in the lack of immediate progress. In a memo he wrote for Eisenhower after the trip, he described U.S.-Pakistani relations as an "investment" from which the United States was "not in general in a position to demand specific returns." According to Dulles, the U.S. presence in Pakistan meant that the United States could expand its influence over time, leading to "trust and friendship."

Ayub Khan, for his part, assumed that once Pakistan's military had been equipped with modern weapons -- ostensibly to fight the Communists -- it could use them against India without causing a major breach with the United States. In his memoirs, he acknowledged that "the objectives that the Western powers wanted the Baghdad Pact to serve were quite different from the objectives we had in mind." But he argued that Pakistan had "never made any secret of [its] intentions or [its] interests" and that the United States knew Pakistan would use its new arms against its eastern neighbor. Still, when Pakistan tested Ayub Khan's theory in 1965, by infiltrating Kashmir and precipitating an all-out war with India, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson suspended the supply of military spare parts to both India and Pakistan. In retaliation, in 1970, Pakistan shut down a secret CIA base in Peshawar that had been leased to the United States in 1956 to launch U-2 reconnaissance flights. (Although Pakistan had made the decision to shut down the

base right after the 1965 war, it preferred to simply not renew the lease rather than terminate it prematurely.)

U.S.-Pakistani relations were scaled back after the suspension of military aid, but neither side could give up on trying to find some common ground. Ayub Khan's successor as president, General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, agreed to serve as an intermediary between the United States and China, facilitating the secret trip to Beijing in 1971 by Henry Kissinger, then U.S. President Richard Nixon's national security adviser. Later that year, Nixon showed his gratitude for Pakistan's help by favoring West Pakistan against separatist East Pakistan and its Indian supporters during the civil war that resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. The United States played down West Pakistani atrocities in East Pakistan, and Nixon tried to bypass Congress to provide some materiel to West Pakistani forces. But that did not stop the country from dividing. As a civilian government led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto picked up the pieces in the new, smaller Pakistan, the United States and Pakistan maintained some distance. During a 1973 visit by Nixon to Pakistan, Bhutto offered Nixon a naval base on the coast of the Arabian Sea, which Nixon declined. By the time the relationship had started to warm again, when Washington lifted the arms embargo on Pakistan in the mid-1970s, Pakistan had already sought economic support from the Arab countries to its west, which were by then growing flush with petrodollars.

Off Base

The next time the United States and Pakistan tried to work together, it was to expand a relatively small Pakistani-backed insurgency in Afghanistan at the United States' request. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in 1979, the United States saw an opportunity to even the score following its poor showing in the Vietnam War and bleed the Soviet army dry. The Afghan mujahideen, which had been trained by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and funded by the CIA, would help. Pakistan's military ruler, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, made his sales pitch: "The Soviet Union is sitting on our border," he told an American

journalist in a 1980 interview. "Has the free world any interest left in Pakistan?" Later, Zia even surprised the U.S. State Department counselor, Robert McFarlane, with a sweetener: "Why don't you ask us to grant [you] bases?"

The United States was no longer interested in bases in Pakistan, but it did want to use Pakistan as a staging ground for the Afghan insurgency. So Washington not only funneled arms and money to the mujahideen across the border but also quadrupled its aid to Pakistan. Islamabad had been repeatedly asking for F-16 fighter aircraft in the late 1970s and early 1980s; the Reagan administration found a way to grant them, even urging Congress to waive a ban on military and economic aid to countries that acquire or transfer nuclear technology. James Buckley, then undersecretary of state for international security affairs, rationalized in The New York Times that such American generosity would address "the underlying sources of insecurity that prompt a nation like Pakistan to seek a nuclear capability in the first place." In 1983, the first batch of the fighter jets arrived in Rawalpindi.

But as did the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, so the Soviet decision to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan in 1989 exposed the tensions beneath the surface of the U.S.-Pakistani alliance. Differences between Washington and Islamabad over who should lead a post-Soviet Afghanistan quickly emerged and unsettled the two countries' unspoken truce. Pakistan, of course, wanted as much influence as possible, believing that a friendly Afghanistan would provide it with strategic depth against India. The United States wanted a stable noncommunist government that could put Afghanistan back in its place as a marginal regional power.

For the first time, the issue of Pakistani support for terrorist groups also became a sore point. In a 1992 letter to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Nicholas Platt, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, warned that the United States was close to declaring Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism: "If the situation persists, the secretary of state may find himself required by law to place Pakistan in the U.S.G. [U.S. government] state sponsors of terrorism list. . . . You must take concrete steps to curtail assistance to militants

and not allow their training camps to operate in Pakistan or Azad Kashmir [the Pakistan-controlled part of Kashmir]." That threat was hollow, but the United States did find other ways to punish its erstwhile ally. In 1991, Washington cut off military aid to Pakistan after President George H. W. Bush failed to certify to Congress that Pakistan was adhering to its nuclear nonproliferation commitments. Between 1993 and 1998, the United States imposed strict sanctions on Pakistan because of its continued nuclear progress and tests. And it imposed more sanctions between 2000 and 2001 in response to the 1999 military coup that brought General Pervez Musharraf to power. Civilian aid, meanwhile, bottomed out.

With Us Or Against Us

Acrimony continued to color the relationship until 2001, when, after the 9/11 attacks, Washington once again sought to work with Islamabad, hoping that this time, Pakistan would fix its internal problems and change its strategic direction for good. But there was little enthusiasm among Pakistan's public or its military elite, where the country's decision-making power lay, for an embrace of the United States or its vision for the region. Meanwhile, Pakistani diplomats in the United States spent most of their time responding to Congress' criticism of Pakistan's double-dealing in regard to terrorists. The role of ambassador during this period was first held by a former journalist, Maleeha Lodhi, and then by a career foreign service officer, Ashraf Qazi. They worked to build the case that Pakistan was the frontline state in the war on terrorism by reaching out to the U.S. media and lobbying Congress with the help of the growing Pakistani American community. With support from the George W. Bush administration, the ambassadors were able to fend off criticism and get huge aid packages approved. But skeptics, such as the journalist Selig Harrison, pointed out that Pakistan was selling "bad policy through good salesmen." These particular salesmen were succeeded by two retired generals, Jehangir Karamat and Mahmud Ali Durrani, who attempted to work more closely with U.S. military officers, assuring them that reports of continued Pakistani support for the Afghan Taliban were exaggerated. On the U.S. side, Anthony Zinni, who had been commander of the U.S. Central Command at the time of Musharraf's coup and remained

in touch with Musharraf after his own retirement, spoke publicly of the benefit of being able to communicate "soldier to soldier." Still, the soldier-ambassadors were unable to overcome the negative press about Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan.

U.S. ambassadors to Pakistan during this period focused on forging close ties with the country's leader, Musharraf. When Musharraf's control weakened toward the end of the decade, Anne Patterson, who was U.S. ambassador between 2007 and 2010, tried to reach out to civilian Pakistani politicians by meeting the leaders of all of the country's major political parties. To cover the waterfront, Admiral Mike Mullen, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pursued a personal friendship with Pakistan's army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani. Mullen held 26 meetings with Kayani in four years and often described him as a friend. But by the end of his tenure, Mullen expressed frustration that nothing had worked to change Kayani's focus: "In choosing to use violent extremism as an instrument of policy, the government of Pakistan, and most especially the Pakistani army and ISI," he said in a speech to the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2011, "jeopardizes not only the prospect of our strategic partnership but Pakistan's opportunity to be a respected nation with legitimate regional influence."

In the end, during Patterson's and Mullen's tenures, Musharraf's regime crumbled and a civilian government took office. From the start, the new administration, led by Zardari, sought to transform the U.S.-Pakistani relationship into what he called a strategic partnership. Zardari wanted to mobilize popular and political support in Pakistan for counterterrorism, as the United States made a long-term commitment to Pakistan through a multiyear foreign assistance package including more civilian aid. At the same time, the two countries would work together to devise a mutually acceptable Afghan endgame.

As Pakistan's ambassador to the United States from 2008 to 2011, I tried to carry out this agenda and serve as a bridge between the two sides. I arranged dozens of meetings among civilian and military leaders from both sides. Senior U.S. officials, including James Jones, the national security adviser; Hillary Clinton, the secretary of state; and Leon Panetta, the director of the CIA

and later secretary of defense, were generous with their time. Senators John McCain, Diane Feinstein, and Joseph Lieberman hashed out the various elements of a strategic partnership, and Senator John Kerry spent countless hours constructing models for Afghan negotiations. Richard Holbrooke, who was the Obama administration's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan before his death in 2011, shuttled between the capitals, seeking to explain U.S. policies to Pakistani officials and secure congressional support for Pakistan. Over several weekends, when our spouses were away from Washington, Holbrooke and I spent hours together, going to the movies or meeting for lunch in Georgetown. We spoke about ways to secure a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan with Pakistan's support. Convinced that the Pakistani military held the key to stability in the region, President Barack Obama conveyed to Pakistan that the United States wanted to help Pakistan feel secure and be prosperous but that it would not countenance Pakistan's support for jihadist groups that threatened American security.

But in the end, these attempts to build a strategic partnership got nowhere. The civilian leaders were unable to smooth over the distrust between the U.S. and Pakistani militaries and intelligence agencies. And the lack of full civilian control over Pakistan's military and intelligence services meant that, as ever, the two countries were working toward different outcomes. Admittedly, however, things might not have been all that much better had the civilians been in full control; it is easier for strongmen to give their allies what they want regardless of popular wishes, whether it be U-2 and drone bases or arming the Afghan mujahideen. My own tenure as ambassador came to an abrupt end in November 2011, just weeks after an American businessman of Pakistani origin falsely accused me of using him as an intermediary to seek American help in thwarting a military coup immediately after the U.S. raid that killed bin Laden. The allegation made no sense because as ambassador, I had direct access to American officials and did not need the help of a controversial businessman to convey concerns about the Pakistani military threatening civilian rule. The episode confirmed again, if confirmation was needed, that supporting close ties with the United States is an unpopular position in Pakistan and that there is a general willingness in Pakistan's media, judicial, and

intelligence circles to believe the worst of anyone trying to mend the frayed partnership.

Till The Bitter End

Given this history of failure, it is time to reconsider whether the U.S.-Pakistani alliance is worth preserving. At least for the foreseeable future, the United States will not accept the Pakistani military's vision of Pakistani preeminence in South Asia or equality with India. And aid alone will not alter Islamabad's priorities. Of course, as Pakistan's democracy grows stronger, the Pakistanis might someday be able to have a realistic debate about what the national interest is and how it should be pursued. But even that debate might not end on terms the United States likes. According to 2012 poll data, for example, although most Pakistanis would favor better ties with India (69 percent of those polled), a majority of them still see India as the country's biggest threat (59 percent).

With the United States and Pakistan at a dead end, the two countries need to explore ways to structure a nonallied relationship. They had a taste of this in 2011 and 2012, when Pakistan shut down transit lines in response to a NATO drone strike on the Afghan-Pakistani border that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. But this failed to hurt the U.S. war effort; the United States quickly found that it could rely on other routes into Afghanistan. Doing so was more costly, but the United States' flexibility demonstrated to Islamabad that its help is not as indispensable to Washington as it once assumed. That realization should be at the core of a new relationship. The United States should be unambiguous in defining its interests and then acting on them without worrying excessively about the reaction in Islamabad.

The new coolness between the two countries will eventually provoke a reckoning. The United States will continue to do what it feels it has to do in the region for its own security, such as pressing ahead with drone strikes on terrorist suspects. These will raise hackles in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, where the Pakistani military leadership is based. Pakistani military leaders might make noise about shooting down U.S. drones, but they will think long and hard before actually doing so, in light of the potential escalation of

hostilities that could follow. Given its weak hand (which will grow even weaker as U.S. military aid dries up), Pakistan will probably refrain from directly confronting the United States.

Once Pakistan's national security elites recognize the limits of their power, the country might eventually seek a renewed partnership with the United States -- but this time with greater humility and an awareness of what it can and cannot get. It is also possible, although less likely, that Pakistani leaders could decide that they are able to do quite well on their own, without relying heavily on the United States, as they have come to do over the last several decades. In that case, too, the mutual frustrations resulting from Pakistan's reluctant dependency on the United States would come to an end. Diplomats of both countries would then be able to devote their energies to explaining their own and understanding the other's current positions instead of constantly repeating clashing narratives of what went wrong over the last six decades. Even if the breakup of the alliance did not lead to such a dramatic denouement, it would still leave both countries free to make the tough strategic decisions about dealing with the other that each has been avoiding. Pakistan could find out whether its regional policy objectives of competing with and containing India are attainable without U.S. support. The United States would be able to deal with issues such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation without the burden of Pakistani allegations of betrayal. Honesty about the true status of their ties might even help both parties get along better and cooperate more easily. After all, they could hardly be worse off than they are now, clinging to the idea of an alliance even though neither actually believes in it. Sometimes, the best way forward in a relationship lies in admitting that it's over in its current incarnation.